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**War images and image makers in the Victorian era : aspects of British visual and written portrayal of war and defence c.1866-1906.**

Stearn, Roger Thomas

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WAR IMAGES AND IMAGE MAKERS IN THE VICTORIAN ERA:  
ASPECTS OF THE BRITISH VISUAL AND WRITTEN  
PORTRAYAL OF WAR C.1866-1906.  
*and defence*

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis considers aspects of British perceptions, images and attitudes towards war and defence, and certain key persons who presented them to the public, approximately from 1866 to 1906. It is concerned primarily with leading civilian artists and writers on war and defence, and with the message and images presented by the press, books and pictures, on land warfare more than naval warfare. It considers first the visual images of war in the press and painting, and the press special war artists and the studio battle-painters. It then considers war correspondents and the work and message of two leading correspondents, Archibald Forbes and George Warrington Steevens. It then considers aspects of the war-portrayal and message of the fiction of future war. Conclusions drawn include the essential unity of the presented image of war and defence, such that the varied media and communicators mutually reinforced their message. The image was shaped by predetermined selectivity by an ideological cluster of patriotism, imperialism, social darwinism, bellicism and martial values. These so dominated perceptions that the presentations of those with and without battle experience hardly differed. The presentations were purposive and inspirational, warning and urging material and moral preparation. War was presented positively, as heroism and adventure, its horrors minimised and contained. Military and civilians interacted in this presentation, and the communicators were also influenced by factors including continental influences, party politics, journalistic imperatives, artistic and literary convention, and individual careerism. Though pacifists and others dissented from it, the influence of this dominant image of war and defence was pervasive, shaping the assumptions of the pre-1914 nation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the Great War the pre-1914 mentality and the influences that formed it have continued to fascinate and have been the subject of polemic and research. In recent years following a less traumatic change, the ending of the Empire, the imperialist mentality and the influences that formed it have also been of increased concern to historians. At the same time there has been a renaissance of military and related history. Since the late 1950s when Brian Bond pioneered the study of the Victorian army, major work has been published on the 19th and early 20th century army, navy, defence policy, wars, war and society and civil-military relations, and on related areas of international relations, the Empire and imperialism, literature and the media. This thesis is indebted to the work of scholars in these areas. John Keegan, John Ellis, Richard Holmes and others have studied the actualities of war and battle. This thesis does not study such reality, yet it is the implicit standard against which its subject, the images and perceptions of war presented to the public, is evaluated. Not having experienced battle, I largely depend on these historians for that standard.

This thesis attempts to contribute towards answering two related questions. First, what input of information and images of war and defence did the reading public - approximately the 'political nation' of the upper, middle and artisan classes - receive from the various written and

visual media, from the press, books and pictures? Second, who were the communicators, the image-makers, who constructed this input, and what were their backgrounds, social position, influences on them, and their attitudes? A full answer would be immense, beyond any single thesis. This thesis deals with some of the issues, assumptions and images of war and defence presented to the British public, with influences which formed their notions and images of war and defence; and with those who presented them to the public, the image-makers, in the period approximately from 1866 to 1906. It comprises studies of related aspects of its theme and is necessarily selective, omitting or considering only briefly some important topics. Some of these have already been studied, for example navalism by A.J. Marder and by W.M. Hamilton, or invasion scares by Howard Moon. It considers aspects of its theme which have hitherto not been so researched. It is concerned primarily with civilian writers on war and defence, publicists who reached a wide audience and had credibility in their day. It is largely concerned with land warfare and to a lesser extent with the navy, navalism and sea warfare. It relates to war and society, militarism, imperialism, civil-military relations, war and the media, and the 'unspoken assumptions' and climate of opinion preceding and during the Great War.

The public received its input on war and defence from a variety of sources, constructed by a variety of communicators: journalists, politicians, publicists,

artists and fiction-writers. The thesis' approach to its subject is partly thematic, and largely through certain key individual communicators. These were, in a sense, self-selecting through contemporaneous opinions of them, and the scale and circulation of their work. The thesis considers first the visual images of war in the press and painting - the iconography which complemented contemporary writing on war - and the leading artists, both artist-reporters ('special war artists') and studio painters, who presented them. It relates the battle-painters to the 'world of art' and to issues of war and defence. It then considers war correspondents and the work and message of the leading war correspondents of the mid and late Victorian periods respectively, Archibald Forbes and George Warrington Steevens. Next it considers some aspects of the war-portrayal and message of the fiction of future war. It includes each selected communicator's career, message in his military and related writings, and contemporaries' estimation of him, and attempts to place his work in its context, relate it to contemporary military thinking, evaluate it historically and assess its influence. A continuing theme is the relationship of the military to the civilian communicators, and the former's contribution to the latter's input on war and defence. Finally the thesis offers conclusions, some of them tentative, on its broad and varied subject.

This thesis is original in that nobody has previously so considered the subject. Inherent in research is that one may discover nothing new of importance, and in the earlier stages of my research I spent much time rediscover-

ing from primary sources what had already been discovered and published. While it includes data from the Dilke, Wilkinson, Arnold-Forster, Roberts and other papers, the thesis by its nature draws much from published sources: Kitson Clark has written of, "the mistake of believing that what is unpublished is necessarily of greater significance than what is published. There is no reason why this should be so". The quotations included are necessary evidence because of the significance not only of what was stated but how it was stated, the language used: the medium was part of the message. The thesis considers some subjects, notably the press, written about by sociologists. I have taken a 'commonsense' view that much-read publications had influence though it cannot now be quantified, and that they were influenced by their readers though this also cannot be quantified. I have not attempted to impose sociological models on historical data. This thesis is partly on colonial war, not its reality but its presentation to the British public: the thesis is necessarily Anglocentric. The perceptions of indigenous peoples are important but not the subject of this thesis.

This thesis is reduced from a much larger, more extensive study which so exceeded the specified maximum size that, with the agreement of my supervisor, I have omitted a major section and much reduced those remaining. That omitted is on the work and message of two leading civilian defence publicists, Charles Dilke and Spenser Wilkinson. I have, however, used some of this research in the other sections and final conclusions, and hope to

publish from it. I have published two articles on subjects closely related to and complementary to this thesis. The first, originally intended for this thesis, is 'Wells and War: H.G. Wells's writings on military subjects, before the Great War', The Wellisian VI NS (Summer 1983). The second is 'War and the Media in the 19th Century: Victorian Military Artists and the Image of War, 1807-1914,' RUSI: Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies (September 1986).

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R.T.S.

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"all read of war  
The best amusement for our morning meal!"

Coleridge, 'Fears in Solitude', 1798.

"When the history of our age comes to be written  
the pictorial press will form an inexhaustible  
storehouse for the historian."

Mason Jackson, 1885<sup>1</sup>.

In 1885 Mason Jackson, the Illustrated London News art editor and pioneer historian of the pictorial press, wrote of, "the inherent love of pictorial representation in all races of men and in every age...the pictures speak a universal language which requires no teaching to comprehend".<sup>2</sup> Persons' weltanschauung, including perceptions of and attitudes to war, was much shaped by pictures.<sup>3</sup> They complemented written text and were usually more memorable, more extensively received and, from childhood on, continually influencing. Visual images, and from them more general conceptions, of the armed forces and of war were conveyed through a variety of interconnected media ranging from advertisements, consumer-product packaging such as biscuit tins, cigarette cards, commemorative pottery, magic-lantern slides, inn signs and fairground ornamentation, through calendars, postcards, toys and children's books to the canvases exhibited at the Royal Academy and purchased by

Queen Victoria and by provincial plutocrats.<sup>4</sup> Most widespread and probably most influential were the artists' pictures published in the illustrated press. They had initially the impact of topicality but their influence, direct and indirect, continued for longer.

Since earliest history men have portrayed war in the varied media of their cultures, often glorifying it - or, as with Jacques Callot or with Goya - portraying its horrors.<sup>5</sup> The portrayal of war as pictorial journalism was a British innovation of the 1840s made possible by printing technology and a sufficiently large public to make it profitable: "the pictorial press of London originated with the Illustrated London News in 1842".<sup>6</sup> It first regularly published illustrations to the news and, "no sooner became an assured success than it was imitated", as had been Punch, in Britain and overseas.<sup>7</sup> Imitators included the Illustrated Midlands News, the steel-engraved Illustrated News of the World, and Henry Vizetelly's Pictorial Times, "a cheap competitor...a clever and popular journal for some years".<sup>8</sup> Illustrated papers were also started in the colonies, on the continent and in the United States.<sup>9</sup> In Britain and the Empire - for the I.L.N. followed the flag to the clubs and messes, to the frontiers and beyond - the I.L.N. remained dominant until the Graphic was founded in 1869 on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War, "a most favourable time for establishing a new paper" and became its leading rival: "the two papers eclipsed all other illustrated papers in the world".<sup>10</sup> The illustrated press employed artists to sketch events on location, functioning similarly to news photographers later.



They had special skills: "the artist who supplies the sketch has acquired by long practice a rapid method of working, and can, by a few strokes of his pencil, indicate a passing scene by a kind of pictorial shorthand which is afterwards translated and extended in the finished drawing".<sup>11</sup>

According to Henry Vizetelly, Herbert Ingram first intended the Illustrated London News to be a crime paper but Vizetelly argued for wider news coverage and "made a great point of the Afghan and Chinese wars in which we were then engaged, and of the many 'telling' subjects these would furnish the engraver".<sup>12</sup> War was "the food on which picture newspapers thrive best".<sup>13</sup> The I.L.N. and other papers were imperialist and defence-minded, and gave extensive coverage to wars, especially British colonial wars<sup>14</sup>. They employed special war artists or artist-correspondents as well as sometimes using local artists or serving officers.<sup>15</sup> The sketches sent from the war were usually adapted by London staff artists for publication. Sometimes they were much altered, though sometimes famous special artists' sketches were printed in facsimile complete with the artists' notes.<sup>16</sup> Some drawings were prominently featured as full, double or triple page illustrations; for Tel-el-Kebir the I.L.N. printed a four-page fold-out.<sup>17</sup> Photography antedated pictorial journalism, but was long no threat to the special artist.<sup>18</sup> Until the late 19th century cameras were so cumbersome they could be used only for static scenes, and even with the late 19th and early 20th century handheld cameras effective battle pictures were not usually possible. The camera was limited to

events in its presence: the artist could portray events he had not witnessed. The photographs from South Africa which the I.L.N. printed in 1900 were blurred and less informative than artists' sketches.<sup>19</sup> As late as the Great War combat was still portrayed by artists, possibly partly because they could fulfil the public's expectations of thrilling heroic war.<sup>20</sup> This resulted in what John Terraine has called the "two images", from photographer and artist, "two different wars, puzzling for those at home".<sup>21</sup> News film was shown from the 1890s but even in the Great War its limitations were such that it complemented rather than was a rival to the special artist.<sup>22</sup>

The special artists came from varied backgrounds and had varied careers.<sup>23</sup> Though there were exceptions, notably officers, the majority were professional artists trained at colleges and studios in Britain and on the continent.<sup>24</sup> Staff artists on the illustrated papers were often chosen through personal contacts, or because they impressed by drawings of witnessed events they sent to the paper. Having proved themselves drawing events in Britain - royal and parliamentary ceremonial, demonstrations, fires and accidents - they might then be invited to the élite employment, with the best pay and prospects, of special war artist. Sometimes wanting any competent drawings from a war, illustrated papers printed those sent by freelance artists, British or local, and this provided an alternative entry to the career of war artist. Or a freelance on the spot might make an agreement with a paper or agency and so establish himself. Sometimes, as with non-

artist war correspondents, specials had military connexions and had considered a military career. Some made war illustration a life career: for others it was a brief episode in an artistic career mostly in Britain. Success as a special depended largely on character and luck, rather than background. The successful shared certain characteristics, essentially those of successful correspondents. They were technically competent, brave, confident and physically and mentally tough; energetic and keen, sociable and able to make friends with officers. Campaigning could be exhausting, and was best endured by those young and those who retained into middle age the qualities of their young manhood. Prior's editor wrote of him, "he never grew old".<sup>25</sup> The lives of some of the leading war artists illustrate their characteristics and varied careers.

The pioneer special war artist was William Simpson (1823-99), known as 'Crimean Simpson', who portrayed the Crimean War and, for the I.L.N., the Abyssinian campaign, Franco-Prussian War and Commune and the Afghan War, and became regarded as the leading special artist.<sup>26</sup> However, he was then eclipsed by Melton Prior (1845-1910), probably the most famous special artist, whose career spanned the "golden age" of war illustration.<sup>27</sup> The son of a landscape painter, he was educated at St. Clement Danes Grammar School and at art college in Boulogne. In 1868 he joined the I.L.N. and first portrayed miscellaneous events in Britain. He showed the qualities of a successful special artist: he drew exceptionally fast and his work was "eminently graphic,

and he had a keen eye for a dramatic situation".<sup>28</sup> His opportunity came in 1873 when he was sent to Ashanti as the I.L.N. special war artist. He went with "pride and elation at being sent out to represent the most important illustrated paper in the world".<sup>29</sup> He met war correspondents, including Henty and Stanley, and from them learned campaigning. He made military contacts, notably Wolseley who was especially helpful to correspondents: they were, Prior wrote, "placed on the same footing as Staff officers".<sup>30</sup> Like other correspondents Prior was armed and fought in battle, with his double-barrelled shotgun loaded with swanshot. He survived battle and fever and sent dramatic sketches to the I.L.N. The war was much publicised and unexpectedly popular, and made Wolseley a popular hero. It also, with the I.L.N.'s promotion, made Prior famous. Having proved a successful war artist and become so known that his name was an asset, he was repeatedly employed by the I.L.N. as a war special. Proud of himself and his profession, for thirty years he "followed the drum", covered campaigns from the Carlist War to the Russo-Japanese War and drew, he claimed, over one hundred battles. By 1900 he was recognised as "the doyen of war specials".<sup>31</sup>

Another leading special war artist was Prior's rival Frederick Villiers (1852-1922), "the Forbes of special war artists".<sup>32</sup> Born in London, he was educated in France and at the Royal Academy Schools, and while a student did free-lance pictorial journalism. As a boy he had been keen on soldiering and a Volunteer cadet; later he was an officer

in the 24th Middlesex Volunteers. In 1876 at the time of the Turco-Serbian War he suffered a "fit of dyspeptic melancholia", decided to "lose my own feelings for a time in the noise and excitement of battle", offered his services to the Graphic and went as special artist to the war.<sup>33</sup> He was successful and thereafter devoted almost his entire career to war illustration, covering colonial campaigns, the Sino-Japanese War and the Great War. F.L. Bullard wrote, "He has seen more battles than any soldier living and endured more privation".<sup>34</sup> He was the admiring friend of Archibald Forbes. He was a competent artist who exhibited at the Royal Academy,<sup>35</sup> though some of his Graphic drawings were crudely and inaccurately redrawn, and on his later campaigns he also used still and cine cameras.<sup>36</sup> He became famous as a special and as such, romantically, identified himself. The title of his final memoirs encapsulated his attitude - Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure. The Times obituary dismissed him as, "only an artist of moderate ability".<sup>37</sup> Another prominent war artist was Frank Vizetelly (1830-83), son of a London publisher of Italian descent and brother of Henry Vizetelly.<sup>38</sup> He worked for the Pictorial Times and Le Monde Illustré, then for the I.L.N. He portrayed the 1859 Austro-Italian War, Garibaldi's 1860 campaign and the American Civil War, and was killed with Hicks Pasha in 1883. Others were special war artists for only part of more varied careers, sometimes for only a single campaign. J.A. Crowe (1825-96), for example, was an I.L.N. special artist in the Crimea, taught art in India, was a Times reporter and finally entered the Foreign Office.<sup>39</sup>

Like other war correspondents, the special artists suffered the hardships and risked the dangers of war: disease, shot and shell, execution as spies, drowning.<sup>40</sup> Some died on service. Those who survived and wrote memoirs emphasised what they had been through: it was essential to their image. Prior and Villiers emphasised their repeated escapes from death.<sup>41</sup> In their reports, lectures, interviews and long self-laudatory memoirs, the special artists presented themselves as heroic adventurers. Prior repeatedly sent drawings of himself to the I.L.N. In illustrations to articles and to their memoirs, and sometimes at their lectures, they appeared in campaigning kit: paramilitary jacket, jauntily-angled wide-brimmed hat, belt, straps, pouches and holster. An alternative style was evening dress, with medals and decorations. Villiers lectured with knobkerries, spears and other native weapons around him, and "always carried into the lecture room that air of the swashbuckler which was at one time comportment for the soldiers of the pen".<sup>42</sup> The image of the special artist as adventurer was further promoted by their editors, by books on the press, and by Kipling's The Light That Failed (1891). In 1882 Joseph Hatton wrote that, "the pencil is as adventurous as the pen...the newspaper artist's life is as full of venture as that of the journalistic correspondent with, in warfare, the additional spice of danger attaching to the possession of sketching materials".<sup>43</sup> In 1885 Mason Jackson wrote that the special artist, "undergoes fatigues, overcomes formidable difficulties and often incurs personal danger in fulfilling his mission".<sup>44</sup> Although soldiers, particularly rankers, sometimes

grouched at the privileges and luxuries of correspondents and artists, the dominant press continued to emphasise their heroic suffering and endurance. Editors boosted public interest in them by articles and exhibitions of sketches.<sup>45</sup> The I.L.N. printed Prior's sketch of himself drawing Dr. Jameson, and later printed "the sketcher sketched", a full-page drawing by another artist of Prior sketching under fire in the Boer War.<sup>46</sup> The specials and their promoters repeatedly quoted compliments from the famous. When Prior lectured on Tel-el-Kebir it was reported - with his drawing of himself lecturing and the Prince of Wales prominent in the front row - in the I.L.N. and the Prince's praise was quoted.<sup>47</sup> Villiers recorded in his memoirs that at Victoria's request the Graphic forwarded his campaign sketches to her and, "sometimes on returning my portfolio the Queen would send me a charming little note".<sup>48</sup>

Success as a special artist could bring high rewards: financial, social and in prestige and fame.<sup>49</sup> Campaigning gave the opportunity of acquaintance with officers including royals, aristocrats, and generals who were popular heroes. Villiers became acquainted with the Dukes of Connaught and Teck, and with Beresford, Burnaby and Roberts.<sup>50</sup> Simpson stated that artists, because considered uncritical, were more welcome on campaign than correspondents.<sup>51</sup> Generals - with the notable exceptions of Chelmsford and Kitchener - wanting favourable publicity were usually friendly towards correspondents and special artists. Wolseley, despite his oft-quoted condemnation of correspondents as "drones", conciliated and used them.<sup>52</sup> He repeatedly helped Prior,

and after Tel-el-Kebir lent him his own battle plan to copy.<sup>53</sup> In 1886 Roberts approached Villiers and invited him to accompany his staff in the next war, which he said would be against Russia.<sup>54</sup> Such favours later made their contrasting treatment by the British authorities in the Great War the more galling for veteran specials. Villiers wrote, "I resented being so scurvily treated...when through forty years of British warfare I had been persona grata with generals like Wolseley, Roberts, Methuen, Browne and Buller".<sup>55</sup> Leading specials were well paid, with generous expenses, and might have the opportunity of loot. Prior, who later righteously machine-gunned a looter in Alexandria, looted gold objects from Kumasi and smuggled them past Wolseley's sentries.<sup>56</sup> They might gain British medals or at least campaign ribbons, and foreign medals and orders.<sup>57</sup> Villiers stated in Who's Who he was "the recipient of twelve English and foreign war medals, clasps and decorations", and like Archibald Forbes, he lectured wearing his medals and orders. On return to England they had the opportunity of further income from lectures, articles, books, and the sale of drawings and paintings. Success as a special artist could be the means of social climbing, and their social aspirations were sometimes criticised. In 1883 the Magazine of Art mocked "the gentleman who having gone with an expedition, say to Madagascar, and there met a duke... has returned to England with an increased sense of his own importance and a curious delusion that he has somehow become related to the aristocracy".<sup>58</sup> Special artists might, like successful explorers, "the latest empire builder, the newest millionaire, or the most recently



discovered society beauty",<sup>59</sup> be invited into "Society" and even temporarily lionised. Villiers became acquainted with the Prince of Wales and, "my staying with the Prince... brought me a sheaf of social engagements and for a year I enjoyed the hospitality of a number of delightful people".<sup>60</sup>

The special war artists largely shared the values and attitudes of the officers with whom they campaigned. They were proud of British military prowess: Villiers told Russian officers the "thin red line" had never been defeated.<sup>61</sup> Like war correspondents, some had been or were officers in the regular army, Volunteers or Yeomanry. They were sociable, convivial and hospitable. They enjoyed alcohol and travelled well-provided with it. Prior's memoirs repeatedly emphasised this: in the Ashanti war his porters included a woman "carrying between fifty and sixty pounds' weight of whisky and claret on her head".<sup>62</sup> The specials identified with the forces they accompanied and were critical of politicians especially Mr. Gladstone, whom Villiers blamed for the failure of the Gordon relief expedition and refused to meet. They shared the officers' imperial and racial beliefs. They claimed that British imperial wars were justified, emphasised the barbarities of the states the British attacked - Ashanti human sacrifice and Burmese torture - and asserted the beneficence of British rule.<sup>63</sup> Officers conventionally categorised and judged ethnic groups. Wolseley, for example, wrote from Sierra Leone in 1873, "The negroes are like so many monkeys; they are a lazy, good-for-nothing race, no matter what Exeter Hall may say to the contrary".<sup>64</sup> The artists shared such beliefs.

Prior wrote of the necessity of firm treatment and flogging of native servants, and described Fantee men as, "rank cowards and utterly worthless as soldiers".<sup>65</sup> He wrote, "no Egyptian was ever reknowned for pluck".<sup>66</sup> He wrote of South Africa, "A Missionary Kaffir becomes a liar and a thief, and the women, as soon as they put on stockings, lose all sense of morality, whereas a raw Kaffir is one of the most honest men to be found in the world and the women are most virtuous".<sup>67</sup> He praised the Rhodesian settlers: "the finest specimens I had even seen, manly and plucky".<sup>68</sup>

The special artists enjoyed their work and were eager for combat, despite what they saw in battle and helping the wounded afterwards. Frank Vizetelly was, "always in a fever of excitement whenever there was a warlike outbreak in any quarter of the world".<sup>69</sup> F.L. Bullard wrote that, "Villiers is fond of his exhilarating profession, and delights in the perils and even the hardships that must be endured on the warpath".<sup>70</sup> Prior wrote of the Egyptian campaign, "we were in for some good fighting, and the correspondents were cheerful enough in consequence", and that, "the opening of a battle is always most exciting".<sup>71</sup> They expressed their attitudes both in their drawings and their writings. They shared their officer contemporaries' conventional view of war, based on a warrior ethos and particular attitudes to heroes and to death. Despite and because of death and suffering, war was a challenge and adventure often, though not always, thrilling and heroic, and usually with splendid conduct by all British troops. Prior wrote of the bombardment of the Alexandria forts,

"the sight was magnificent and inspiriting", and typically, that in Egypt the 60th charged, "in the grand old style", and described the British bayonet charge at Tel-el-Kebir as "a grand sight".<sup>72</sup> He wrote that the cavalry charge at Elands-laagte was, "done in certainly magnificent style", and that, "Tommy had behaved magnificently throughout this long fight...We had a glorious day...The dauntless bravery of English officers we seem to take for granted as a national heritage, but one's heart goes out in positive admiration to Tommy Atkins - sweating, swearing, grimy, dirty, fearless and generous Tommy".<sup>73</sup> Similarly Villiers wrote of the Black Watch before Tel-le-Kebir, "Veritable dogs of war they looked, as they stood steady, waiting for the word, like hounds eager to be slipped upon their quarry".<sup>74</sup> He described a British cavalry officer in the Sudan: "The handsome face of their gallant leader, radiant with the spirit of war upon it, glowed in the morning light".<sup>75</sup> Their experience of war was real, and they perceived and expressed it in the clichés of their ideology and age. Their perception of war was epitomised by the end in the Great War of Villiers' long career. He initially reported the Western Front but apparently failed to comprehend it. He tried to report it as he had colonial campaigns and, he wrote, "I exhaust the Western Front of dramatic incidents - I seek fresh fields and pastures new".<sup>76</sup> So he went again to a familiar war, on the North West Frontier, where the British were commanded by that very 19th century officer, Kipling's erstwhile hero Dunsterville.<sup>77</sup>

In their pictures - in what they selected, how they portrayed it and what they omitted - the special artists expressed their perception of war as dramatic and heroic. They selected and emphasised "dramatic incidents".<sup>78</sup> Prior typically, "had an eye for the dramatic situation" and, "knew how to pick out subjects that made for striking illustration".<sup>79</sup> They favourably portrayed commanding officers: Prior chose not to draw Wolseley falling off his camel.<sup>80</sup> Usually they portrayed victory or heroic last stands and ignored discreditable incidents. Prior, for example, ignored the panic of some British troops in Zululand, though he later wrote, "A more disgraceful scene I have never witnessed".<sup>81</sup> However if it were sufficiently important they portrayed British defeat: Prior drew the British fleeing down Majuba Hill, "that terrible calamity to British arms".<sup>82</sup> They knew the reality of war: Prior wrote that, "The sight of these mangled soldiers, groaning in their agony, is too awful even for the hardened correspondent to witness unmoved".<sup>83</sup> They portrayed death and wounds, but in a style that omitted the horror, mutilation, disfigurement, suffering and agony, and showed relatively few British dead. For example, Prior portrayed the site of Isandhlwana without horror: except for some skulls and bones he showed only the living, and broken wagons and boxes.<sup>84</sup> Similarly his sketch of the highlanders attacking at Tel-el-Kebir showed mostly unharmed soldiers, dramatically charging, with only two prone presumably dead, neither their faces nor their wounds visible.<sup>85</sup> A typical example, from the Boer War, was Ernest Prater's drawing of stretcher-bearers carrying wounded from Spion Kop: the men

on the stretchers were not mutilated, disfigured or bloody, and their faces showed no suffering: they hardly seemed wounded.<sup>86</sup> Fenton and other war photographers similarly selected and omitted. The specials in their writings expressed the same attitude to combat death as in their pictures. Villiers wrote that after Tel-el-Kebir the dead highlanders were, "all resting in easy attitudes on the desert as if in deep slumber, shot through their brains".<sup>87</sup> This convention of omission of horror from pictures of battle apparently expressed attitudes to British war, rather than to the portrayal of horror and suffering, for a different convention applied with natural calamities such as earthquakes and with foreign atrocities. Simpson and others drew, and the I.L.N. published, horrific pictures of the reprisals against Communards, and Villiers drew, and the Graphic published, a horrific picture of Serbs burned to death by Turks.<sup>88</sup> Some contemporaries recognised the subjective element in special artists' portrayal. Barnett wrote, "there is an idea of some sort in every incident...which...gives the picture human interest, and makes it more than a dry record of incident. If mere facts were all that were required, the special might throw away his pencil and take to instantaneous photography".<sup>89</sup> Ostensibly objective reportage, the specials' portrayal expressed a particular view of war, resulting from their perception of war and their identification with the British forces and the British imperial cause. Though the specials portrayed war, and especially British war, so selectively and favourably, nevertheless their sketches were usually not published as drawn.

Until the 1880s they had to be redrawn for engraving, and even later were often redrawn by artists at the journals' offices, according to the conventions of war illustration, making them more dramatic and heroic.<sup>90</sup> Maurice from his experience of the Egyptian campaign criticised press misrepresentation, including the London redrawing of specials' sketches into unrealistic fictional pictures and the drawing, without specials' sketches, of imaginary pictures. Both, he alleged, "tended directly to falsify the popular conception of war".<sup>91</sup> Moreover some drawings were not published, for example Prior's of the auctioning of dead soldiers' kit after Majuba.<sup>92</sup>

Specials sometimes portrayed battle events they had not themselves witnessed, although they were at or near the battle: for example René Bull's drawings of the 21st Lancers charge at Omdurman and of a lyddite shell bursting among Boers at Spion Kop. Moreover if the specials' sketches failed to arrive, London office artists drew instead, from available evidence and imagination. When the I.L.N. did not receive Prior's sketches of the battle of Abu Klea, Caton Woodville in London portrayed it. Such reconstructions were considered legitimate, but faking - drawing by specials purportedly witnesses but in fact far away - was repeatedly denounced, especially by leading specials. In 1883 Harry Barnett condemned the artist who, "puts up at the best hotel in a big city at least a hundred miles from the seat of war, and there concocts sketches under the influence of champagne and one-and-nine-penny cigars",<sup>93</sup> but he stated this was "uncommon" and that usually specials

were conscientious. Leading specials emphasised the authenticity of their own work, and the turpitude of some of their rivals. Villiers condemned the "cowardly charlatans" who, unlike himself, did not go to the front but far away in safety, faked drawings, written reports and films.<sup>94</sup> The illustrated papers also asserted the authenticity of their drawings, in the Russo-Japanese War the Sphere claimed it would, "publish no Imaginary Drawings".<sup>95</sup>

The leading specials and their work were much praised. For example, in 1874 the Magazine of Art praised Prior's Ashanti War sketches as, "truly admirable for their high artistic qualities", and in 1883 Barnett praised Prior's "excellent work" and praised C.E. Fripp's drawing as, "so suggestive, picturesque and expressive".<sup>96</sup> Despite occasional cynicism - Mason Jackson wrote of a "popular belief that some of the sketches in the illustrated newspapers were evolved from the inner consciousness of the artists"<sup>97</sup> - the special artists' published drawings were generally accepted as accurate, though pacifists alleged they misrepresented war.<sup>98</sup> The illustrated press portrayal of war was a major influence on the public image of war. The illustrated papers at sixpence weekly could be easily afforded by the middle classes and by better-paid artisans, and they had large circulations - the I.L.N.'s exceeded any daily newspaper's before the Daily Mail - and they were recirculated and retained more than newspapers.<sup>99</sup> Contemporaries believed them influential: Mason Jackson wrote that the I.L.N., "helped to change the character of

public taste".<sup>100</sup> The illustrated press artists' pictures were - excepting a few inadequate photographs at the end of the period - the only visual images of recent battle being fought. They had initially the impact of topicality, of recent news, but their influence, direct and indirect, lasted far longer. Some were displayed in special exhibitions, reprinted in special editions of their papers, and used in popular multivolume war histories.<sup>101</sup> They were cut out and pasted in scrapbooks and on screens, and used to decorate the nurseries of the rich and the cottages of the poor.<sup>102</sup> War correspondents and specials used them, as lantern slides, to illustrate lectures.<sup>103</sup> The I.L.N. was kept, in bound volumes, in private, club and public libraries: Sir Arthur Bryant later recalled as a boy lying on the floor of his father's library looking at volumes of the I.L.N.<sup>104</sup>

The illustrated press war pictures were sources of cartoons, by Tenniel and others in Punch and elsewhere, advertisements, illustrations in textbooks, encyclopedias and fiction of imperial war, for example G.A. Henty's.<sup>105</sup> Moreover the specials and other artists used them as sources for battle paintings. In 1874 the Art Journal reported the exhibition together of Desanges' painting 'Fighting in the Ashantee Forest', of Wolseley and "the gallant Black Watch" in the Ashanti War, and of Prior's I.L.N. sketches on which the painting was based: "guided by faithful and graphic suggestions from these excellent sketches, and this guidance confirmed and illustrated by the personal observation and experience of Mr. Prior himself, M. Desanges formed his conception of the view he has



placed upon his canvas".<sup>106</sup> Villiers wrote proudly that, "the great French military artist, Alphonse de Neuville, painted his famous picture of Tel-el-Kebir from my original sketches".<sup>107</sup> Woodville as part of his work for the I.L.N. had to use Prior's and other specials' sketches, and they influenced his own battle paintings. Also even battle painters, especially those without battle experience, with less immediate contact with specials' drawings, were necessarily influenced by them.<sup>108</sup>

1. Mason Jackson, The Pictorial Press (1885) 361. Jackson was art editor of the I.L.N.
2. lb 1. More recent writers emphasise the extent to which pictures are 'read' through cultural assumptions.
3. For example H.G. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography (1934, '69) I 78,80.
4. There is an increasing literature on such artefacts (largely for collectors) and on the varied forms of imperial and military propaganda: relevant works include John & Jennifer May, Commemorative Pottery 1780-1900 (1972); N.J. Arch, 'Potted History: British military commemorative ware', N.A.M. Annual Report 1972-3; T.R. Nevett, Advertising in Britain: A History (1982); V.G. Kiernan, European Empires From Conquest to Collapse, 1815-1960 (1982); John M. MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire: The manipulation of British public opinion 1880-1960 (1984); Michael Jubb, Cocoa & Corsets (1984); Andrew Rose, Toy Soldiers (1985); James Opie, Britains Toy Soldiers (1985): (ed) John M. MacKenzie, Imperialism and Popular Culture (1986). Historians differ on the question of 'manipulation' of the public.
5. Recent works giving examples of the visual portrayal of war include (ed) John Ferguson, War and the Creative Arts (1972); John Keegan & Joseph Darracott, The Nature of War (1981).
6. Joseph Hatton, Journalistic London (1882) 18. On the I.L.N. see also Jackson.
7. Jackson 311. On the I.L.N. partly from ib, *passim*; Joseph Hatton, Journalistic London (1882) 221-39; T.H.S. Escott, Masters of English Journalism (1911) 228-9; Christopher Hibbert, The Illustrated London News Social History of Victorian Britain (1975) 9-15. For a hostile account of the I.L.N.'s founder Herbert Ingram (disputed by his widow) see Henry Vizetelly, Glances back through Seventy Years (1893) I 222-38, 356, 423-4.
8. Hatton 231; Vizetelly I 242-60, 404-23, II 60.
9. Colonial papers included the Canadian Illustrated News, Illustrated Sydney News, Illustrated Australian News, South African Illustrated News, Jackson 361-2.

10. Jackson 314; Hatton 239.
11. Jackson 317; see also Barnett.
12. Vizetelly I 225. The I.L.N. regularly reported 'Law and Police' including sensational violent crime, and breach of promise cases.
13. Jackson 305. Cf Lucy Brown, 'The Treatment of the News in mid-Victorian Newspapers', T.R.H.S. 5th Series XXVII (1977) 27,33; Victorian News and Newspapers (1985) 40,60,62.
14. The illustrated press had extensive coverage of foreign and colonial wars, of the Volunteers, reviews, tournaments, manoeuvres, new weapons and warships, and also features on military history. For example on the Volunteers I.L.N. LVIII ('71) 368-9,371-2; LXIV ('74) 359-61; LXXXVI ('85) 34; CXV ('99) 15-6, 58-9; on the 'Woolwich infant' LVIII ('71) 143-4. Volumes CVII ('95) and CVIII ('96) featured a series of pictures by Caton Woodville 'Battles of the British Army'. The Egyptian war dominated volume LXXXI (1882), the Gordon Relief Expedition LXXXV (1884), the Sudan campaign CXIII (1898), and the Boer War CXV-VII (1899-1900). Imperial and military themes were continued in the advertisements, especially in the '90s and during the Boer War.
15. On special war artists from the illustrated periodicals, material in N.A.M., artists' memoirs (see below), Hatton; Harry V. Barnett, 'The Special Artist', MA ('83) 163-70; Jackson; R. Kipling, The Light That Failed (1891); Paul Hogarth, The Artist as Reporter (1967); Pat Hodgson, The War Illustrators (1977); Peter Johnson, Front Line Artists (1978).
16. See note below. Examples of facsimiles of Melton Prior's sketches in I.L.N. LXXXI ('82) 407-9; CVII ('96) 140-1, 165; CXV ('99) 761.
17. I.L.N. LXXXI, 7 Oct extra supp.
18. On photography partly from Helmut & Alison Gersheim, A Concise History of Photography (1971) 139-46, 245-50; Emanuel Lee, To the Bitter End: A Photographic History of the Boer War (1985) 3-12; exhibits in the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford.
19. e.g. I.L.N. CXV (1899) 706,715.
20. Hogarth 56.

21. John Terraine, Impacts of War 1914 & 1918 (1970) 102-3.
22. Films at N.A.M. and I.W.M.; see also Lee 6.
23. Sources as footnote 15 above. Contemporary accounts were usually uncritical, eulogistic, derived from artists' own accounts, sharing their values and omitting much. Artists' memoirs were self-lauding, anecdotal and omitted much, but showed the self-image they chose.
24. On the Victorian 'world of art' see next chapter.
25. S.L. Bensusan in Melton Prior, Campaigns of a War Correspondent (1912) 320; see also Harry Furniss, My Bohemian Days (1919) 127-8.
26. DNB; Hodgson 14-15, 42-53; Johnson 78, 163-4.
27. On Prior largely from ILN; obituary, Times 3 Nov. 1910 pl1; Prior op.cit, and drawings etc in N.A.M.: these include a portfolio of 78 papyrotypes of sketches of the Nile Expedition, see B. Mollo, 'Melton Prior's sketches of the Gordon relief expedition', N.A.M. Annual Report 1973-74, 25-7. Prior's other assignments included a tour of South America, ILN CXV ('99) 221 and the 1899 Dreyfus trial, ib 272, 377. Prior claimed that during his career he had only one complete year without war or adventure, Times obit.
28. DNB; see also Times obit.
29. Prior 5.
30. 1b.9
31. A.C.R. Carter, The Work of War Artists in South Africa (Art Annual, 1900) 8.
32. Furness 134. The reference was to Archibald Forbes the war correspondent: on Villiers largely from Frederick Villiers. Pictures of Many Wars (1902); Peaceful Personalities and Warriors Bold (1907); Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure (1921). Archibald Forbes, Souvenirs of Some Continents (1885); Memories and Studies of War and Peace (1895); obituary, Times 6 April 1922 pl4; F. Lauriston Bullard, Famous War Correspondents (1914). He worked largely for the Graphic but also for the ILN and others.
33. Villiers, Pictures 2,3.

34. Bullard 156.
35. He worked mainly as a special artist and according to Graves exhibited only two paintings, both at the Royal Academy: 'The road home; the return of an Imperial brigade from Afghanistan' (1882) and 'Fighting Arabi with his own weapons; an incident of the battle of Tel-el-Kebir' (1883). Algernon Graves, A Dictionary of Artists (1901, '69) 79; The Royal Academy (1905, '70) IV 87. In Who's Who Villiers stated he, "painted 20 feet battle picture of siege, called Sap and Shell".
36. Villiers, Personalities 26, Pictures 76.
37. Times obit.
38. Vizetelly II 82-102.
39. DNB. At the 1884 Berlin Conference Crowe met Spenser Wilkinson who later married his daughter, Henry Spenser Wilkinson, Thirty-Five Years (1933) 59-62. On other specials' careers see Hodgson and Johnson.
40. Hatton 228-30; Villiers, Pictures 44, 118, Bullard 269.
41. Prior 6-7, 18, 36, 69-70, 121, 203, 214, 268, 293; Villiers, Pictures 42-4, 92, 227, 233-4; Personalities 154, 258; II 73, 262. The Times obit. described Villiers as "full of entertaining anecdote and hairbreadth escapes".
42. Times 6 April 1922, 11.
43. Hatton 226, 229-30.
44. Jackson 328.
45. Villiers, Personalities 182.
46. ILN CVIII ('96) 165, CXV ('99) 865.
47. ILN LXXXII ('83) 219-20. After this Savage Club lecture, Prior lectured publicly on the war at the Crystal Palace and Southampton, Bournemouth, Bath and Clifton.
48. Villiers, Villiers I 228.
49. Few gained such rewards: Hogarth suggested "usually the least interesting" artists were successful, 24.

50. Villiers, Pictures 143,176; Personalities 41,44,147,178.
51. Quo Johnson 25.
52. Villiers, Pictures 67, Villiers I 312.
53. Prior 176; of Villiers, Pictures 128. Cf Cardigan's use of Simpson, Johnson 18.
54. Villiers, Personalities 148.
55. Villiers, Villiers II 309.
56. Prior 25,29,155.
57. War correspondents and artists resented the British authorities' refusal to award them campaign medals Prior 168; Villiers, Villiers I 283; Archibald Forbes, Barracks, Bivovacs and Battles (1891, 1910) 318-28.
58. Barnett 163.
59. William Le Queux, The Under Secretary (nd) 116.
60. Villiers, Villiers I 232. Cf Vizetelly II 96.
61. 1b, Pictures 155.
62. Prior 11.
63. ILN LXIV ('74) 388-9; Prior 26, 226-30, 247.
64. Wolseley to Louise Wolseley, 27 Sept.'73, (ed) George Arthur. The Letters of Lord and Lady Wolseley 1870-1911 (1922) 10.
65. Prior 7.
66. 1b 179.
67. 1b 96.
68. 1b 259.
69. Vizetelly II 98.
70. Bullard 191.
71. Prior 163,149.

72. 1b 151,161,174.
73. 1b 286,287.
74. Villiers, Villiers I 266.
75. 1b I 312.
76. 1b II 306.
77. L.C. Dunsterville (1865-1946), model for Stalky in  
Stalky & Co.
78. Villiers, Villiers I 260, II 320. Cf Kipling, Light  
That Failed (1891,1920) 19.
79. DNB; Bensusan 'Preface' to Prior vi.
80. Prior 209.
81. 1b 108; Cf 116-7.
82. ILN LXXVII ('81) 413; Prior 129.
83. 1b 63. Prior wrote that in Ashanti he was first sickened  
by the sight of the wounded, but got used to it, 19.  
See also 1b 190; Villiers, Pictures 12-13.
84. ILN LXXIV ('79) 44-5.
85. ILN LXXXI ('82) 407-9.
86. Sphere 3 March 1900, supp.iv, Hodgson 183.
87. Villier, Pictures 207.
88. ILN LVIII ('71) 557,592,595; Johnson 75-6; Graphic,  
16 Sept '76, 265, Hodgson 137.
89. Barnett 164,166.
90. For example see facsimile of Prior sketch, ILN LXXXI  
( '82) 407-9 and Woodville's version: 1b 372-3;  
Jackson 318-19; compare Prior sketches in N.A.M.  
with ILN. Apparently usually the engraving,  
though altered in style and more dramatic, was not  
essentially changed in content from the sketch.  
Jackson admitted there were sometimes mistakes, 357.
91. (ed) Frederick Maurice, Sir Frederick Maurice (1913)  
210-13.

92. 6806-249, N.A.M.
93. Barnett 163.
94. Villiers, Pictures 84, 132-3; Personalities 107,134;  
Villiers II 45-51, 182-3.
95. Sphere 13 Feb 1904, Hodgson 185.
96. AJ ('74) 222; MA ('83) 168,170.
97. Jackson 312.
98. Wilhelm Carlsen, War As It Is (The Peace Society, 1892)  
13-14.
99. Hibbert 13; Brown, Victorian News 52-3; ILN advertisements, including for diamond jewellery and fur-lined overcoats, indicated wealthy readers. Information on press readership is inadequate, Nevett 85. In 1882 the ILN reportedly attracted more advertising than it could publish, ib 80.
100. Jackson 307.
101. Exhibition, Hodgson 16. Example of histories include H.W. Wilson, With the Flag to Pretoria (1900-1); After Pretoria: The Guerilla War (1902); Japan's Fight For Freedom: The Story of the War Between Russia and Japan (1904-6) with illustrations from sketches by specials including Prior, Villiers and Prater, and reconstructions by London artists including Woodville and Charlton.
102. Kenneth Grahame, Dream Days (1898) 124; Villiers, Villiers I 289.
103. ILN LXXXLL ('83) 219-20.
104. Arthur Bryant, 'Foreword' to Hibbert 9: his father was Assistant Secretary to His Majesty's Privy Purse. Bryant compared the impact of the illustrated press to that of television today. See also Joanna Smith, Edwardian Children (1983) 167.
105. An example of advertisement: 'Atbara' laces, repro. Jubb 43. An example of book illustration: those by Joseph Nash, R.I. and John Schönberg to G.A. Henty, The Dash for Khartoum (nd): Schönberg was himself a special artist. Victorian fiction was much illustrated, and scenes from literature were popular subjects of paintings.



106. AJ ('74) 222. Chevalier Louis William Desanges (1822-? Fl.1846-87) fashionable British portrait painter of French origin, painted pictures of V.C. winning exploits, exhibited in the 'Victoria Cross Gallery' at the Crystal Palace, and some other battle scenes, James Dafforne, 'Louis William Desanges' AJ ('64) 41-3; Graves, Academy I 310-11; Christopher Wood, A Dictionary of Victorian Painters (1978) 125.
107. Villiers, Villiers I 228.
108. Specials' sketches also had influence on and through the artists who redrew them in London: employment for artists, some later distinguished, while attempting to establish reputations, Hatton 230, 233; Jackson 355-7; Villiers, Villiers I 228.

CORRIGENDUM p8, 2nd paragraph, beginning line 2, should read: 'often glorifying it - as with Roman monuments or Napoleonic romanticism - and less often - as with Jacques Callot'.

1. CONTEXT: THE VICTORIAN "WORLD OF ART"

Contemporary with and in part influenced by the special war artists, were the studio-based artists in Britain who painted battle scenes, some of whom also worked for the illustrated press.<sup>1</sup> These battle-painters were not a category totally separate from other artists. They trained as did other artists and only later chose to specialise in battle painting, and they continued within the Victorian "world of Art" - that complex of artists, dealers, critics, patrons and publishers, of institutions, hierarchies and publications, of moral, political and artistic values - which, while closely interconnected with the ruling, and art-buying, upper and middle classes, nevertheless formed a distinct subculture. The Victorian battle painters can be understood only in their context of this "world of Art", to which they belonged. The values of the battle painters and the message of their paintings must be seen in relation not only to other contemporary statements of attitudes towards war, but also in relation to the wider values and messages of other contemporary painters and paintings, and the responses to them.

In the period from 1870 to 1914 art apparently continued to flourish in Britain.<sup>2</sup> There were more artists, art students, paintings, exhibitions, galleries, artists' societies, art publications, and mass reproductions of paintings. The 1871 census stated that there were in the United Kingdom 6,074 artists and painters, of whom 5,005

were male and 1,069 female.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, with more art-training facilities and the 'surplus' middle-class spinsters, the numbers and competition continued to increase.<sup>4</sup> The number of lady artists especially increased. They remained excluded from membership of the Royal Academy but their work was hung there and a few, in Britain as in France, were highly regarded.<sup>5</sup> There were lady art critics and writers in the art press; for example Alice Meynell, Helen Zimmern and Mrs Andrew Lang. The Magazine of Art stated in 1897 that, "the Victorian era will henceforth be synonymous with the brilliant advance of Women in Art as in other fields".<sup>6</sup> There was much public awareness of artists, with articles in the press and cartoons in Punch and other comic papers. They were the subjects of popular fiction - for example, Rita's 'Told in the Studios' - and it became a cliché of the art press that, "Artists are at present taking the place formerly occupied by the curate in the fashionable young lady's novel".<sup>7</sup> The leading artists became celebrities. Featured, for example, in the Strand Magazine's 'Illustrated Interviews' and 'Portraits of Celebrities', together with bishops, politicians, H.M. Stanley, Jules Verne, and members of the royal family.

British painting was dominated by the Royal Academy, the artistic establishment. Its power, fame and social prestige reached its zenith under the presidency from 1878 to 1897 of Frederick Leighton, later Lord Leighton, and its exhibitions and banquets were part of the London season.<sup>8</sup> It was the arbiter of orthodox artistic taste. Its annual exhibition was the climax of the artist's year; an out-

standingly successful picture, "the popular success of this year's academy"<sup>9</sup> could bring immediate fame and launch a successful career. Associateship and especially membership conferred a status which brought commissions and higher prices.<sup>10</sup> Even those who believed it should be reformed recognised its pre-eminence and representativeness. The Art Journal claimed in 1875 that, "it is by what the Royal Academy of England has to show that we must be content to stand or fall".<sup>11</sup> In 1901 H.M. Spielmann claimed the Academy exhibition, "reflects with accuracy the tendency of that art which appeals to the greatest number".<sup>12</sup> Successful artists usually had the same basic career pattern: a middle-class background, though socio-economically varied; art-training in Britain and often on the continent; then exhibition at the Academy or Royal Scottish Academy, and the rewards of Victorian artistic success. Success resulted from attracting buyers. The art market was largely controlled by the rich, buying for themselves or sometimes for civic art galleries. They were influenced by dealers such as Gambart and by the private galleries.<sup>13</sup> Art publishers such as Dickenson & Company, later the Fine Art Society. Hildesheimer, C.W. Faulkner or Raphael Tuck, bought paintings, or only their copyright, for reproduction as engravings for the lucrative mass market.<sup>14</sup> Publishers of periodicals such as the Illustrated London News and the Graphic also bought them to reproduce, and publishers sometimes commissioned works.<sup>15</sup> Chromolithographs were very popular: Millais' 'Cherry Ripe' in the Graphic in 1880 sold 600,000 copies.<sup>16</sup> G.W. Joy wrote of the Cassells' Yule Tide prints of his works, "I have seen them in little

country inns, or by the flickering firelight through the windows of roadside cottages".<sup>17</sup> Royalty continued to buy paintings; Victoria sometimes bought the year's Academy success: for example in 1855 Leighton's 'Cimabue's Madonna' and in 1874 Elizabeth Thompson's 'The Roll Call',<sup>18</sup> She commissioned works from favoured artists and her patronage advanced their careers. Aristocrats such as the Duke of Westminster continued to buy paintings. So too did self-made manufacturers such as Thomas Holloway, Lord Armstrong and Joseph Chamberlain.<sup>19</sup> Leighton sold largely to financiers, Alma-Tadema largely to nouveaux riches. Possibly their art-buying was 'bricabracomania', possibly an attempt to buy history, culture and legitimacy. Businessmen also controlled civic art patronage through the new art galleries. These expressed orthodox middle-class taste, including for scenes of recent imperial history and battle. Frederick Goodall's 'Jessie's Dream' was in the Mappin Gallery, Sheffield; works by Elizabeth Butler and E.M. Hale were at Leeds, and by Woodville at Liverpool and Bristol.

The 1870s and early '80s were for artists a boom period of high prices and "marvellous prosperity"<sup>20</sup> when the wealthy bought much and, as the Art Journal stated, "paid quite absurd prices for pictures by artists of eminence".<sup>21</sup> Such pictures included Edwin Long's 'Babylonian Marriage Market' for 7,100 guineas and Millais' 'Princes in the Tower' for £3,900. From the 1880s demand and prices for paintings fall. Some blamed the economic depression: M.H. Spielmann wrote that, "Art is a flower that

blossoms only in the sunshine of prosperity".<sup>22</sup> Some attributed the decline to collectors having no more room to hang paintings, or preferring to buy old masters as investments.<sup>23</sup> The decline meant lean years for some artists, but did not affect artists uniformly. It probably increased the divergence between the rewards of leading artists and of those less successful: for the former painting continued lucrative. Success could bring fame and high rewards, financial and socially. Leading artists, for example Millais or Leighton, became acquaintances of royalty and merged smoothly into 'Society'. They were much honoured: by the Academy and its foreign equivalents, by the state in Britain and overseas, and by the universities. Millais was awarded Oxford and Durham doctorates and in 1885 created a baronet. Leighton was created knight, baronet and in 1896 baron, the first artist created a peer. The increasing number of "Knights and baronets of art" was recorded approvingly in the art press.<sup>24</sup> Though such honours to artists and scientists were partly to conceal the use of an inflated honours list for political funding,<sup>25</sup> they also proclaimed the establishment status of the successful artist. Symbolic of leading artists' material success and status were the houses they built. Idiosyncratic and expensive, these were repeatedly featured in the popular illustrated press and the art press.<sup>26</sup> Leighton's house in Kensington, "all alight with colour and gold" contained the domed arabian court with old Syrian tiles and a black marble fountain.<sup>27</sup> Alma-Tadema's "wonderful house" in St. John's Wood resembled his paintings, with a Pompeian-style doorway, stairs of burnished brass which a German journalist once described as gold, marble walls,

cedar doors, onyx windows and an aluminium dome.<sup>28</sup> Most British artists were not 'Bohemians' in the French meaning, not alienated or rebels, but accepted the status quo: typically after selling his 'Dante in Exile' Leighton invested the money in railway debentures.<sup>29</sup> They were middle-class professionals serving the desires of the rich.

France dominated 19th century art and Paris was widely regarded as the artistic capital of the world: the Art Journal declared in 1879, "France, whom, all in all, we regard as the greatest expounder of modern Art, the heiress of all its traditions".<sup>30</sup> Many British artists trained on the continent, the British art press reported continental art news, especially the Salons, and featured continental, especially French, artists, and the French Gallery in Pall Mall exhibited French paintings.<sup>31</sup> British patrons - including the Hertfords, Sir Richard Wallace and John Bowes - continued to purchase French paintings. In religion, philanthropy and such causes as anti-slavery and temperance, British overseas connections were primarily with the Empire and the United States.<sup>32</sup> However in fine art, as in fashion and cookery, the British were primarily influenced by the continentals, especially the French. British painters were influenced, in varying degrees, by continental painters.

## 2. CONTEXT: THE VICTORIAN "WORLD OF ART": NOTES

Abbreviations: AJ - Art Journal  
MA - Magazine of Art  
quo - quoted in

1. Some artists worked both as special war artists and as battle painters e.g. C.E. Fripp, G.D. Giles, E.M. Hale, Caton Woodville.
2. Quantitatively, art flourished: quality was and is a matter of opinion.
3. AJ ('75) 374.
4. MA ('81) 61.
5. From 1860 females were admitted to the Academy Schools, but there was an "unwritten law" against their membership of the Academy: in 1879 Elizabeth Butler failed to be elected by two votes. Women's exclusion was controversial. Recent feminist works have re-evaluated the history of women artists, e.g. Germaine Greer, The Obstacle Race (1979).
6. MA ('97) 285.
7. MA ('81) XXiv, cf MA ('82) 252.
8. Leonée & Richard Ormond, Lord Leighton (1975) 102.
9. Anon, 'Portraits of Celebrities', Strand Mag. XI ('96) 650.
10. Cf ILN LVIII (1871) 335: Vereker Hamilton, Things That Happened (1925) 159.
11. AJ ('75) 216, cf AJ ('86) 381.
12. M.H. Spielmann, Royal Academy Pictures 1901, 1.
13. William Gaunt, Victorian Olympus (1975) 61-3, 68, 76, 103; Ormond 50, 73.
14. Royal Academy Pictures passim; MA and AJ passim; Elizabeth Butler, An Autobiography (1922) 111, 124, 151, 168, 185, 191.
15. G.W. Joy, The Work of George W. Joy (1904) 19.
16. William Gaunt, The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy (1975) 142.
17. Joy 15.
18. For a eulogistic view of Victoria's patronage v John Oldcastle (Wilfrid Meynell), 'Queen Victoria and Art', MA ('79-80) 283-8; for a less favourable view, Ormond 115.



19. MA ('82): Ormond 162; MA ('82)x; Ormond 160.
20. MA ('81) 265.
21. AJ ('88) 249-50.
22. M.H. Spielmann, R.A. Pictures 1894:
23. AJ ('88) 249: cf AJ ('89) 185; M.H. Spielmann, R.A. Pictures 1894:: 'Painting', EB xx 498.
24. AJ ('99) 222.
25. H.J. Hanham, 'The Sale of Honours in Late Victorian England', Vic. Stud. III (1959-60) 277-89; Barry McGill, 'Glittering Prizes and Party Funds in Perspective, 1882-1931', Bull. I.H.R. LV (1982) 88-90.
26. e.g. the series, 'The Houses of Our Artists', MA ('81) on Millais' house v Walter Armstrong, Sir John Everett Millais (Art Annual, 1885) 29-30.
27. Wilfrid Meynell, 'Sir Frederick Leighton's House', MA ('81) 169-76.
28. Rudolph Dircks, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (Art Annual, 1910) 22; Gaunt, Olympus 105.
29. Gaunt, Olympus 75. See also Ormond, Leighton 50, 119.
30. AJ ('79) 183.
31. AJ ('75) 185.
32. e.g. (ed) W.J. Townsend et al, A New History of Methodism (1909) II; C.J. Barnett, Britain Pre-eminent (1969); Christine Bolt, The Anti-Slavery Movement and Reconstruction (1969); Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (1971). In science and music British connections were more with Germany.

## 2. CONTEXT: CONTENT AND VALUES IN VICTORIAN PAINTING

"Art is always the best history of any age".

Professor J.A. Cramb.<sup>1</sup>

British painting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was varied and eclectic, a *mélange* of genres and styles.<sup>2</sup> The dominant group were the classicists led by Leighton, Watts, Poynter and Alma-Tadema, with their repeated sunlit scenes of young nudity, marble and mythology.<sup>3</sup> They portrayed Victorians in costume and omitted Roman cruelty and horror. Anecdotal 'subject' and 'genre' pictures, historical - for example Millais' 'Boyhood of Raleigh' - and contemporary, continued popular; despite Whistler's criticism,<sup>4</sup> as did religious subjects; landscapes and seascapes. There were sometimes scenes of urban poverty, "the philanthropy of art".<sup>5</sup> 'Monkeyana' continued, and among well-known animal painters was Edmund Caldwell who enjoyed Lady Burdett-Coutts' patronage, painting Cocky the cockatoo and her other pets.<sup>6</sup> Among the thousands of pictures exhibited annually there were very few of the Empire. The Mutiny inspired such emotive paeans to British heroism as Frederick Goodall's 'Jessie's Dream', Valentine Prinsep portrayed India, and some of the battle painters portrayed scenes of colonial war, though fewer than of the Napoleonic wars. G.F. Watts painted not the Empire but imperial heroes: Lawrence, Roberts and Rhodes.<sup>7</sup> The Empire was prominent and popular in the press, including the religious press, music halls, advertising, fiction for adults and children, verse, and such popular entertainments, rivalling Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, as

'Savage South Africa' at Earls Court.<sup>8</sup> Yet, despite its artistic opportunities, the Empire failed to inspire British professional artists as did North Africa the French 'Orientalists'.<sup>9</sup> In part this was because of artistic values, notably classicism: in part because professional artists believed they needed to be near galleries and potential buyers - though colonial galleries bought works by British artists including Leighton, Lady Butler and Vereker Hamilton, and Woodville and Hamilton found princely purchasers in India<sup>10</sup> - and partly, with the less successful, because of travel costs. In not painting the Empire, professional artists diverged from widespread popular attitudes, while in painting it, battle-painters were exceptional among professional artists.

Indicative of the divergence between popular attitudes and what most professional artists chose to paint, were the responses to General Gordon. Gordon was the Victorian popular imperial "hero of heroes".<sup>11</sup> A wave of Gordon cultus passed over England in 1884",<sup>12</sup> and continued over twenty years. He was eulogised by the press, by soldiers including Wolseley and Butler, by the Poet Laureate, by schoolbooks and popular hagiographies such as General Gordon: Hero and Saint.<sup>13</sup> He was revered by Queen, cottager and colonial, commemorated in statues and statuettes, in Doulton jugs, parian busts and Staffordshire figures.<sup>14</sup> His Khartoum Journals published in 1885 were, Baring claimed, "probably read by almost every educated man in England".<sup>15</sup> John Morley claimed that, "Gordon seized the imagination of England".<sup>16</sup> His fate aroused popular emotion as did that of no other man and made such an impact

that there was a "Gordon reflex" in the 1892 Uganda controversy, which apparently contributed to the retention decision.<sup>17</sup> G.W. Steevens wrote in 1898, "Gordon has become a legend with his countrymen, and they all but deify him".<sup>18</sup> Yet despite all this, despite the dramatic incidents of his life suitable for portrayal - James Morris has commented that Gordon, like other Victorian heroes, had a vivid sense of theatre<sup>19</sup> - and despite the 19th century tradition of commemorative painting, the leading artists, the Academicians, chose not to paint Gordon. After his death there were only two notable paintings of him, both by artists never elected to the Academy, George W. Joy and Caton Woodville.

George W. Joy's attitude to his painting of Gordon was indicative. Joy was a successful, fashionable painter of portraits and historical 'genre'; middle-class, patriotic, imperialist, Unionist and a keen Volunteer.<sup>20</sup> Some of his paintings had ideological purpose. He painted 'The Fair Flagmaker' and 'Sister Kingmaker' in response to the Home Rule crisis, and 'Britannia' in response to the Boer War. Another deliberately propagandist work was 'The Death of General Gordon'. He wrote, "On no historical or political event have I felt so strongly...a betrayal of one of the greatest men we ever possessed".<sup>21</sup> He believed Gordon a hero, comparing him to Christ, and approached, "with all due reverence, this great subject".<sup>22</sup> He researched, gaining information from Wingate and others who knew Gordon and the Sudan. He painted with the purpose of, "doing something, however insignificant, to help on that awakening

of the conscience of the nation".<sup>23</sup> Though his painting arguably fell short of his aspiration, it became, much reproduced, the accepted image of Gordon's death, and Joy continued proud of it. Yet in painting Gordon and so expressing popular and fervent British beliefs, Joy was exceptional among professional artists.

Artists' and critics' attitudes towards art and popular artistic taste formed part of the context of attitudes towards battle paintings. Victorian taste was not monolithic, but a mixture of widely-accepted values and of continued controversy, changing through time. Academy acceptance of a picture was on basis of values within the artistic establishment, yet always some Academy pictures were condemned by the critics. No single person dictated taste though some particularly influenced it. The dominant critic was Ruskin, "the Master", whom Wilfrid Meynell in 1881 called, "the greatest of living art-critics".<sup>24</sup> The art critics of the daily press also influenced attitudes, and that of The Times probably most of all. Its art critic in the 'seventies was Tom Taylor, who established an authoritative reputation: Meynell wrote that he, "played a more important part in the history of English art and artists than did many contemporary painters of distinction".<sup>25</sup> The art press, notably the two leading periodicals the Art Journal and the Magazine of Art and their related publications The Year's Art, the Art Annual and Royal Academy Pictures, and also the Connoisseur; the illustrated papers such as the Illustrated London News and the Graphic which reported artists and exhibitions and reproduced paintings;

the quarterly and monthly reviews; art books and encyclopedias, all contributed to shaping attitudes to art. However their influence, and the typicality of any writer, remains largely conjectural.

Victorian attitudes to art and its purpose varied much. Classicists like Leighton and Poynter believed its purpose was the pursuit of beauty, of noble aesthetic sensation. Whistler and the aesthetes asserted 'Art for Art's Sake'. For Alma-Tadema and his patrons art was for profit, escape and enjoyment. For others it was to tell a story and illustrate a moral. Examples of "pictorial moralizing" were Rossetti's 'Found' and Holman Hunt's 'The Awakened Conscience'. Another was Alfred Elmore's 'On the Brink' in which a young woman hesitates outside a gilt and crimson room of gamblers and demi-mondaines, while behind her lurks a figure resembling Dilke.<sup>26</sup> Religious subjects, such as Hunt's 'The Light of the World' were valued for their religious message, much reproduced and very popular. Some artists asserted art's didactic moral purpose: notably G.F. Watts, whom contemporaries much admired. While aesthetic quality was highly valued, for many the message remained paramount. Some paintings were condemned, regardless of aesthetic quality, because their message was believed immoral. In 1881 the Magazine of Art protested at W.S. Coleman's 'The Swing' as "belonging to a vicious class of subject".<sup>27</sup> British critics repeatedly condemned as immoral French Salon paintings.<sup>28</sup> In 1879 the Art Journal castigated, "those studio enormities wherein

positive obscenity was the character, and a corrupting influence the result".<sup>29</sup> In 1883 it condemned, "the class of Art which renders the Salon at Paris so repellent to wholesome-minded people".<sup>30</sup> British critics also condemned Salon paintings for sensational and horrific subjects: tomb-violation, blood-drinking; death by cholera and by starvation, and suicide by poison or railway.<sup>31</sup> In 1873 the Art Journal asserted that, "Art was not intended to sicken people with the sight of such butchery"; and in 1897 the Magazine of Art condemned, "scenes of violence, of gory horror, and of lust".<sup>32</sup> In British painting, sentimentality was acceptable: horror or too realistic portrayal of suffering or sordidness, were unacceptable. It was in this context of British attitudes to art, its purpose and morality, that the British battle painters worked, and the critics and public responded to their pictures.

2. CONTEXT: CONTENT & VALUES IN VICTORIAN PAINTING: NOTES

1. Quo Mrs. C.E.B. Russell, John Adam Cramb (1950) 87.
2. MA ('82) XXV; AJ ('87) 396.
3. Cf Wolseley to Louise Wolseley, 16 Sept 1900, (ed) George Arthur, The Letters of Lord and Lady Wolseley (1922) 384.
4. William Gaunt, The Aesthetic Adventure (1975) 34.
5. MA ('82) i.
6. Mary Spicer-Warren, 'Illustrated Interviews: The Baroness Burdett-Coutts', Strand Mag. VII ('94) 356-7. On animal painting see also M.H. Spielman, 'John Charlton: Painter of Sport and War', MA ('98) 402-3; MA ('82) 132; MA ('97) 263; 'Painting' EB XX 502.
7. J.E. Pythian, George Frederick Watts (1906) 164-5. On chivalry in Victorian art see Mark Girouard, The Return to Camelot (1981).
8. Lawrence Senelick, 'Politics as entertainment: Victorian music-hall songs', Vic.Stud. XIX (1975) 168-78; ILN CXV (1899) 271; Ben Shephard, 'Lobengula', Hist. Today (April 1984) 36-41.
9. James Harding, Artistes Pompiers (1979) 69-80; Philippe Jullian, The Orientalists (1977) passim. Some British paintings of the Empire are reproduced in Jan Morris, The Spectacle of Empire (1982).
10. AJ ('83) 202; R. Caton Woodville, Random Recollections (1914) 85-93; V.M. Hamilton, Things That Happened (1925) 266; I.B.M. Hamilton, The Happy Warrior (1966) 86,92. Cf amateur painters of the Empire e.g. Marianne North.
11. Gladstone quo John Morley, Gladstone (1903,'11) III 129. For a recent allegation of imperialist manipulation of Gordon's story v Douglas H. Johnson, 'The Death of Gordon: A Victorian Myth', J. Imper. & Commonwealth Hist. X (1982) 285-310.
12. Earl of Cromer, Modern Egypt (1908) I 429.
13. Times 12 Feb '85; Wolseley's Journal 3 April '85, (ed) Adrian Preston, In Relief of Gordon (1967) 187; William F. Butler, Charles George Gordon (1889); H.O. Arnold-Forster, A History of England (nd) 757.



- Valerie E. Chancellor, History For Their Masters (1970) 70, 74-5; A.E. Keeling, General Gordon: Hero and Saint (1886); (Major) Seton Churchill, General Gordon: The Christian Hero (1890). Seton Churchill also wrote Forbidden Fruit For Young Men, favourably reviewed by the Indian Purity Trumpet.
14. On Victoria's attitude (ed) M.A. Gordon, Letters of General Gordon to his Sister (1888) xvii-xix. Indicative of cottagers' and others' attitudes was the popularity of Gordon commemorative ware, N.J. Arch, 'Potted History', N.A.M. Annual Report 1972-1973, 15; examples in Willett Collection, Brighton Museum, and N.A.M. Colonial attitudes were indicated by the Canadian and Australian offers of troops for the Sudan. A minority, radical politicians and others, did not admire Gordon: Buller said, "the man was not worth the camels".
  15. Cromer I 432.
  16. Morley III 116.
  17. Margery Perham, Lugard: The Years of Adventure 1858-1898 (1956) 394-6, 405-8.
  18. G.W. Steevens, With Kitchener to Khartum (1898) 314.
  19. James Morris, Heaven's Command (1973) 507.
  20. On Joy largely from G.W. Joy, The Work of George W. Joy (1904).
  - 21-3. Joy 20-1.
  24. John Oldcastle (W. Meynell), 'Tom Taylor', MA ('81) 66. Cf MA ('96-7) 174; AJ (1900) 89.
  25. Meynell, 'Tom Taylor' 66.
  26. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
  27. MA ('81) xxvi.
  28. e.g. AJ ('73) 775; AJ ('85) 92.
  29. Anon, 'The French Salon of 1879', AJ ('79) 153.
  30. AJ ('82) 211. Cf AJ ('96) 195. See also ILN.
  31. e.g. F.G. Stephens, 'The Salon, Paris', AJ ('86) 253-4; Anon, 'The Paris Salons of 1896', AJ ('96) 195; M.H. Spielmann, 'The Paris Salons', MA ('98) 495.
  32. AJ ('73) 175; MA ('97) 186.

### 3. VICTORIAN BATTLE PAINTERS

#### i. INTRODUCTION

Within the Victorian world of art were the battle painters. Though European states varied in their militarism, their military paintings and attitudes towards them, battle painting was a Europe-wide genre which in the 19th century expressed both nationalist mythology and a common fascination with the Napoleonic wars. In France battle painting had for centuries been officially patronised and encouraged: by Louis XIV, Napoleon and the successive 19th century régimes. France, "where art is so much encouraged by the government"<sup>1</sup> in the 19th century had a minister for the arts, official war artists - in Algeria, the Crimea and Italy - and gave repeated official commissions for battle paintings.<sup>2</sup> In 1886, for example, as the Art Journal reported, "The French Minister of War has commissioned, for the Salles d'Honneur of the Ministry, ten pictures representing the feats of arms of ten several regiments".<sup>3</sup> The leading military painters were in the artistic establishment and much honoured by the state. Vernet, for example, was a Grand Officer de la Légion d'honneur, and Meissonier was awarded the Grand Croix de la Légion. Leading military painters received high prices for their work from French and from British and American patrons. In 1878 Meissonier received £10,000 for his 'Cuirassiers' and A.T. Stewart, an American department-store owner, paid \$76,000 for his 'Friedland'.<sup>4</sup> British battle painters, often trained on the continent, admired and envied their continental contemporaries.

In Britain there had been intermittent land battle paintings through the 18th and early 19th century - for example, West's 'Death of Wolfe' and Copley's 'Death of Major Peirson' - but no British "school of battle painters".<sup>5</sup> There was, however, a thriving tradition of naval war painting and, at Greenwich, "a Walhalla of naval heroes of this country".<sup>6</sup> In Britain there were no official war artists and no government patronage of battle painters. British battle painters remained on the fringe of the artistic establishment, much less honoured and paid than leading artists of other genres. Battle paintings were exhibited at the Academy but almost no battle painters were elected to it.<sup>7</sup> Pictures of land battles, unlike naval battles, were not purchased under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest, and battle painters were not among the artists awarded knighthoods, baronetcies and honorary degrees. Woodville, despite royal favour unmedalled by the British authorities, was awarded the *Palme académique* for his Napoleonic scenes.<sup>8</sup> Possibly indicative of national values though, as we shall consider, probably more indicative of values within the subculture of the artistic establishment, the leading British painters chose not to paint battles. Battle painting was an accepted but minor genre. Battle paintings were popular and impressed contemporaries, and the memory of them long lingered, part of the folk-image of the era. Yet their influence was disproportionate to their number. There were relatively few British battle painters and battle paintings. In 1888 the Art Journal stated, "there are not many battle painters of note in this country".<sup>9</sup> Among the thousands of British painters of the later 19th

and early 20th centuries, there were only about a dozen battle painters considered noteworthy as such by their contemporaries: T.J. Barker, J. Beadle, Elizabeth Butler, J. Charlton, Ernest Crofts, C.E. Fripp, R. Gibb, G.D. Giles, E.M. Hale, Vereker Hamilton, W.B. Wollen, Caton Woodville and Frederick Villiers. Some of these worked largely in other genres even if, like Gibb, they were best known as battle painters. There were other artists who sometimes painted military scenes, for example, A.C. Gow whom Sir James Caw described as "less a battle-painter than a painter of genre subjects in military costume",<sup>10</sup> or Lucy Kemp-Welch, primarily an animal painter. There were also artists who painted other military subjects: illustration of uniforms, for example Richard Simkin, and portraitists who sometimes painted military portraits, for example Charles Furse who painted Roberts. Though the distinction must be somewhat arbitrary, only Barker, Lady Butler, Wollen, Woodville and Villiers, and possibly Fripp and Giles, might be considered primarily battle painters. The best known and most influential were Lady Butler and Caton Woodville.

Paul Delaroche's response to photography, "From today, painting is dead!"<sup>11</sup> has been much quoted, and some art-historians have interpreted later 19th century art largely in terms of response to photography. Yet apparently it had little effect on battle painting before 1914. Possibly it contributed to battle-painters' and the public's concern for material accuracy. Some painters, including Alma-Tadema used photographs. The battle painters made little

use of them, usually preferring their own or special artists' sketches. Caton Woodville sometimes supplemented his sketches by taking photographs, and occasionally drew his Illustrated London News pictures from others' photographs.<sup>12</sup> Lady Butler wrote, "I have never used a Kodak myself, finding snapshots of little value, but quick sketches done unbeknown to the sketched and a good memory serve much better".<sup>13</sup> Photographs could not then challenge battle painting, as photographs were monochrome and static and could not portray a battle as did artists with colour, movement, excitement and the combatants close and vivid. Photographs, unlike artists, could not show individuals and their emotions. War photographers could and did select and omit, but they could not create that particular image of war - imagined, romantic, heroic and idealised - which characterised, and was expected in, the work of the Victorian battle painters.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. VICTORIAN BATTLE PAINTERS: INTRODUCTION

1. MA ('79-80) 230.
2. AJ ('64) 42. MA ('81)x; Harding, Artistes Pompiers 32,77.
3. AJ ('86) 380.
4. 'Meissonier' EB XVIII, 85
5. A.C.R. Carter, The Work of War Artists in South Africa  
(Art Annual 1900) 1.
6. Francis Huskisson, 'The Painted Hall, Greenwich', AJ  
( '89) 201.
7. Crofts, was an R.A.; Gibb R.S.A.
8. Woodville 13.
9. AJ ('88) 23. For contemporary evaluations of the genre  
v Walter Armstrong, 'Victorian Fine Art', Jubilee  
Number, AJ ('87) 176; M.H. Spielmann, 'Painting',  
EB XX, 500.
10. James L. Caw, Scottish Painting Past and Present 1620-  
1908 (1908) 267.
11. Quo Helmut & Alison Gersheim, A Concise History of  
Photography (1971) 23.
12. Woodville 61; ILN CXV (4 Oct '99) 541.
13. E. Butler 231-2, George Eastman introduced the Kodak  
in 1888.
14. The court portrait painter Alfred Chalon told Victoria  
that photography did not threaten painting because  
it could not flatter, Gersheim 64. Paul Hogarth  
has suggested that in the Great War the press used  
artists because photography failed to convey the  
desired heroic image, Paul Hogarth, The artist as  
reporter (1967) 56. See also J.A. Goodall, 'The  
Year', N.A.M. Annual Report 1973-4.

ii. T.J. BARKER

In the 1860s and early '70s, as later, there were few British battle painters. Pre-eminent among them was Thomas Jones Barker (1815-82).<sup>1</sup> The son of an artist, "Barker of Bath", a popular and wealthy painter of landscape and rural life, he trained with his father then went to Paris in 1835 and became a pupil of Horace Vernet, the popular and officially honoured battle-painter and Orientalist.<sup>2</sup> Barker exhibited at the Salon, winning three gold medals. About 1845 he returned to England, and exhibited at the Academy, the British Institution and the Royal Society of British Artists. He painted historical and sporting scenes, portraits, and in 1861 'Queen Victoria Presenting a Bible' (now in the National Portrait Gallery). Many of his paintings were of battle, and after 1872 he exhibited only "war canvases". He painted scenes from the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimea, the Mutiny and the Franco-Prussian War. He had painted Crimean scenes during the war, and returned to them in the 1870s, with 'Balaclava: one of the Six Hundred' exhibited at the 1874 Academy - and eclipsed by Miss Thompson's 'Roll Call' - and 'The Return through the Valley of Death' in 1876. In 1878 in a eulogistic article in the Art Journal, James Dafforne claimed Barker was "the Horace Vernet of England, our principal battle-painter...certainly he remains the master of the battle-field among our artists".<sup>3</sup> He researched for his paintings, acquiring military material and interviewing and portraying surviving participants. His 'Return Through the Valley of Death' was painted with the help of Lord George Paget and other survivors, and every

soldier shown was "a portrait". He portrayed and, as had his French master, glorified patriotic scenes: for example, 'Nelson receiving the Sword of the Spanish Admiral' and 'The Relief of Lucknow'. His battle scenes were dramatic, with close-packed charging horsemen, waving swords and clouds of smoke, dead bodies but no agony. They were more stylised, more in the manner of Vernet, less realistic, and inferior to those of Elizabeth Butler. Nevertheless in ignoring him Lady Butler and those who wrote about her exaggerated the originality of her subject and her role as pioneer of Victorian battle painting.<sup>4</sup>

After his death in 1882 his reputation soon evaporated. Probably this was partly because his style, like his mentor's, became despised as artificial and *démodé*: Vernet's reputation in Britain much declined. Alice Meynell, for example, wrote in 1887 in the Art Journal that, "The triumph and caracolling and the glory of Horace Vernet were indeed past and gone",<sup>5</sup> and in 1902 Claude Philips scorned the "uninspired, and pre-eminently bourgeois Horace Vernet...these flat, stale, and unprofitable performances, by which no pulse is any longer stirred".<sup>6</sup> Vernet was remembered but despised: his British pupil was ignored and almost forgotten. Villiers, reminiscing in 1907, mentioned he had bought one of Wellington's hats formerly owned by "the famous battle-painter Mr. Jones Barker".<sup>7</sup> Yet as early as 1887, only five years after Barker's death, Walter Armstrong did not mention him in his Jubilee article; nor did Spielmann in his Britannica article.<sup>8</sup> For them Victorian battle painting began with Elizabeth Butler.



ii. T.J. BARKER: NOTES

1. My account of Barker is largely from James Dafforne, 'The Works of Thomas Jones Barker', AJ ('78) 69-72; Anon, 'Obituary', AJ ('82) 159; Algernon Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors (1906, 1970) I 114; (ed) George C. Williamson, Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers (1909) I 83-4. Christopher Wood, The Dictionary of Victorian Painters (1978) 33.
2. Harding, Artistes Pompiers 174.
3. Dafforne 69-70.
4. Butler, Autobiography 95; Wilfrid Meynell, The Life and Work of Lady Butler (Art Annual, 1898) 3.
5. Alice Meynell, 'A German Military Painter', AJ ('87) 5.
6. Claude Philips, 'The Wallace Collection: The French Pictures', AJ (1902). Cf 'Vernet', EB XXVII 1030.
7. Villiers, Personalities 124.
8. Walter Armstrong, 'Victorian Fine Art', Jubilee Number, AJ ('87); 'Painting' EB XX. Another soon-forgotten battle painter was L.W. Desanges, see footnote 106 previous chapter. Yet another was George Jones, R.A. (1786-1869): see DNB.

### iii. ELIZABETH BUTLER

The most famous British battle painter was Miss Elizabeth Thompson, later Lady Butler (1846-1933) whose career was contemporary with the golden age of the special war artists.<sup>1</sup> Like Prior she achieved fame in the 1870s and portrayed late 19th century colonial campaigns, and like Villiers her last major work portrayed the Great War. However, unlike them she never saw a battle. When she first exhibited in the 1870s the 'genre militaire' was, she later claimed in her autobiography, choosing to ignore Barker, "a line of painting almost non-exploited by English artists"<sup>2</sup> and, as her brother-in-law the critic Wilfrid Meynell claimed, "a branch of art in which England had hitherto won no victories".<sup>3</sup>

Like most war specials, she was from a middle-class family - wealthy rentiers - had a childhood interest in war and was art-school trained. After training at South Kensington and in Italy, she exhibited religious and military paintings but they were almost unnoticed. The Franco-Prussian War revived her interest in war and she attended manoeuvres. A Manchester manufacturer who had bought one of her sketches commissioned an oil painting.<sup>4</sup> She painted a Crimean scene, 'The Roll Call' and in 1874 exhibited it at the Royal Academy. Her father had discouraged her, arguing the Crimea was "forgotten". In fact it was sufficiently distant for interest in it to revive, while the Franco-Prussian War increased British concern with war and she had little competition as a military painter.<sup>5</sup>

'The Roll Call' was an outstanding success, "the picture of the Burlington House exhibition this season" and "the picture of the year".<sup>6</sup> It "astonished the world", bringing celebrity and establishing her as a leading artist. Its purchaser who had paid £126 was offered £1,000. The Queen and the Prince of Wales both wanted to buy it, and Victoria ultimately did, and also commissioned another painting. Miss Thompson sold the copyright for £1,200: so profitable was the mass reproduction of engravings that popular artists could sell the copyright for more than the actual painting. She followed 'The Roll Call' by further successful historical battle paintings - 'Quatre Bras', 'Balaclava', 'Inkerman'. 'The Remnants of an Army' and 'Scotland for Ever!' - and scenes from recent colonial wars including the Zulu War, the first Boer War and the Egyptian campaign. Though she never repeated her outstanding successes of the '70s and early '80s, she continued a successful military artist portraying historical and contemporary wars, as well as illustrating books and the Graphic. In 1877 she married William Butler, the rising Wolseleyite, and until widowed in 1910 enjoyed the privileged life of a senior officer's wife, marred only by the period in the Boer War when Butler was vilified for his role in South Africa. Following his attitude to the Boer War, she painted almost no pictures of it.<sup>7</sup>

Her career exemplified the rewards of a successful artist. She gained fame: following the 'Roll Call' the press praised, and a quarter of a million photographs of her were sold.<sup>8</sup> She was lionised and met leading artists, royalty, aristocracy and senior army officers. Her work

was praised by artists and critics including Millais, Meissonier, Tom Taylor of The Times, and the arbiter of mid-Victorian artistic taste, "the greatest of living art-critics", John Ruskin. In 1879 she was almost elected to the Academy, losing by only two votes, and it was widely believed that she deserved election; the Magazine of Art in 1881 wrote that her "claim to admission has been publicly recognised since her 'Quatre Bras' ratified the sudden triumph of the previous year's 'Roll Call'".<sup>9</sup> She was elected to the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours, and Princess Louise copied her work.<sup>10</sup> She was widely regarded as the leading British military painter. In her Autobiography - a work characterised by selective reticence, but not by modesty - she noted that a French critic had written of her, "L'Angleterre n'a guère qu'un peintre militaire, c'est une femme".<sup>11</sup> Florence Nightingale, Crimean veterans and other experienced soldiers praised her work. The Duke of Cambridge declared of the 'Roll Call': "It is astonishing to me how any young lady should have been able to grasp the speciality of soldiers under the circumstances delineated in the picture...I was struck by the military character which pervades the grouping and expression of the piece".<sup>12</sup> Wolseley, who loved battle pictures, admired her Tel-el-Kebir painting and wished someone would buy it and present it to him.<sup>13</sup> Engravings of her work were hung "in the mess-rooms of the British Army...in Clubs, Homes and Institutes".<sup>14</sup> She profited financially. At a time when families of the poor existed on a pound a week and "a single lady can get on very nicely upon an income of about sixty pounds" per annum, she sold paintings for

over a thousand pounds.<sup>15</sup> An exceptionally high proportion of her paintings were engraved, and the engravings sold in large numbers in Britain and overseas.<sup>16</sup> She gained help with her painting. The General Omnibus Company sent her horses to draw; cavalry charged for her; engineers formed square and fired for her; and Zulu and Egyptian War veterans posed for her. She was the most famous British woman painter and exceptional as a woman painter not only in the extent of her success and fame, but in that she was a recognised leader of her genre.<sup>17</sup> Her popularity and fame were such that she so eclipsed Barker and other battle painters of the '60s and '70s that late Victorian and Edwardian art critics saw her as the pioneer of British battle painting. In 1887, in his Jubilee retrospect 'Victorian Fine Art' in the Art Journal, Walter Armstrong claimed that the British school of battle painters, "had its origin in the appearance, at the Academy of 1874, of Miss Elizabeth Thompson's 'Roll Call'", and that her works aroused interest in battle paintings and prepared the way for other battle painters.<sup>18</sup> Similarly M.H. Spielmann, writing on British painting since 1875 for the 11th edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica, began his section on military painting with Lady Butler.

She was hardworking and thorough. She read memoirs and histories and interviewed participants. She gathered military equipment, used soldiers as models, and repeatedly sketched men and horses. She was painstaking for accuracy of detail in uniforms and accoutrements. For 'Quatre Bras' she bought some rye in a field and had it trampled by children. Especially after marriage, she knew soldiers of

all ranks, and as a soldier's wife she felt, "the sickening sensation on waking some morning when news of a fight is expected of saying to themselves, "I may be a widow."<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, despite her efforts, her own attitudes and those of the soldiers with whom she talked, excluded her from the reality of battle experience. She noted that, "Men who go through the horrors of war say little about them".<sup>20</sup> Men's attitudes to their experience, and what they believed proper to tell ladies, limited their informing her. A young man like Kipling could enter experiences closed to her. Possibly had she talked more to Florence Nightingale and other army nurses she might have learned more. However, as a soldier's wife possibly she had to close her mind to the dangers and horrors of war. To paint battle one needed a tough-minded, even callous or brutal, acceptance of suffering, as with Caton Woodville; a fatalism; or a crusading determination to end war, as possibly with Verestchagin; or a mental detachment, an innocence or "doublethink" as, apparently, with Elizabeth Butler. She claimed that, "If I had ever seen the corner of a battlefield, I could never have painted another war picture".<sup>21</sup> The Times obituary tribute stated that she had, "an unconquerable optimism which gladdened the hearts of those about her...Absolutely unworldly in her life, she never lost her belief in humanity".<sup>22</sup> This mentality underlay her battle painting and its selection and omission.

As her writings showed, she was concerned with the army and war largely as her visual spectacle, rather than soldiers' experience. She was fascinated by light, colour,

shape and movement, by "picturesqueness" and visual drama. She was thrilled by reviews and manoeuvres, and wrote in her diary after seeing a cavalry charge, "What a sight to please me! I feel a physical sensation of refreshment on such occasions".<sup>23</sup> She herself, and press comment, claimed that she showed the reality and sadness of war.<sup>24</sup> Some contemporaries were deeply moved by her paintings, even weeping at them. She preferred not to portray "a conflict", enemies actually fighting. She claimed a battle painter "should be careful to keep himself at a distance, lest the ignoble and vile details under his eyes should blind him irretrievably to the noble things that rise beyond" and that, "Oh, yes, there is a seamy side to all things, but it isn't my way to turn it up more than is necessary".<sup>25</sup> She wrote of her 'Quatre Bras', "I suppose it would not have done to be realistic to the fullest extent".<sup>26</sup> She wrote in her diary, "I hope my military pictures will have moral and artistic qualities not generally thought necessary to the military genre".<sup>27</sup> She wrote that she was "impregnated...with the warrior spirit in art".<sup>28</sup>

She was influenced by contemporary French painters: by animal painters notably Rosa Bonheur, and by military painters including Meissonier, Detaille and de Neuville.<sup>29</sup> Though Ruskin claimed 'Quatre Bras' was "the first fine pre-Raphaelite picture of battle we have had", her work, in its small size, detail and finish, was similar to the school of Meissonier.<sup>30</sup> She was a careful observer and a technically-skilled and innovative painter: one of the first to correctly portray the movement of horses' legs,

she had a remarkable gift for depicting movement. Her work was admired for its imagination, subject, colour, drama and depiction of individual character and emotion. Her paintings "appealed...to the world at large by their element of pathos, unmistakable but not obtrusive".<sup>31</sup> Soldiers admired her accuracy of horses and matériel and critics, though sometimes criticising her colouring; praised her technique. Wilfrid Meynell noted the importance of drama in her painting: "That was the secret of Lady Butler's success in 'The Roll Call', 'Quatre Bras' and 'Scotland for Ever !' The moments of waiting are dramatic, the fury of attack is dramatic, the reaction of victory is dramatic".<sup>32</sup> The newspaper, periodicals and art press repeatedly praised her work. For example, in 1874 the Art Journal joined the praise of the 'Roll Call', calling it "a genuine expression of Art, as well as a popular picture...this beautiful picture". It praised the portrayal of individual character and claimed the picture showed, "a terrible quietude and passionate severity of absolute fact. The supreme merit of the work, in an artistic sense, lies in this very quality of perfect self-control that refuses to emphasize the misery that is already great enough, and is content with the reserve and silence proper to reality".<sup>33</sup> The Annual Register also praised it, claiming, "It is impossible for a narrative to be told more simply, truly or pathetically; the incidents touch the heart, the drawing and the execution go direct to nature".<sup>34</sup> In 1879 the Art Journal praised her 'Remnants of an Army': "Elizabeth Butler's terribly striking canvas".<sup>35</sup> In 1880 the Magazine of Art reviewing her 'Defence of Rorke's Drift' praised her "vivid imagination" and "grasp of personal



character", and her pictures "fire and energy" and "scrupulous, quiet and close fidelity to the very smallest accidents of individual character and peculiarity".<sup>36</sup> The Journal praised 'Rorke's Drift', though criticising its colouring and composition, as full of dramatic incident; "The action and expression of some of the individuals are very good, notably of the young soldier in the foreground kneeling and reloading his rifle".<sup>37</sup> In 1881 M.P. Jackson in the Magazine of Art praised "the infinitely talented designer of horses in the pictures of 'Balaclava' and 'The Remnants of an Army'".<sup>38</sup> The Magazine claimed her 'Scotland for Ever!' was "her chief work up to date", and praised "her extraordinary mastery of movement", her portrayal of horses, and the expressions of the soldiers: "In others shines the indescribable 'light of battle' and every face is that of a separate, individual and distinct man".<sup>39</sup> In 1882 the Journal praised her 'Floreat Etona!', though criticising its colour, as "full of vigorous design".<sup>40</sup> It claimed that her early paintings "illustrated the Crimean campaign in a manner in which none other of our great wars have even been attempted." It praised her 'Return from Inkerman' as better than her previous work and expressing "that higher phase of Art, 'the pathetic'... in every group, nay, in every figure, there is a mournful story which requires but little effort to imagine". Her works "are not the mere occupants of one's thoughts for a moment, but may be returned to again and again with the certainty that fresh incidents will be discovered, and new interest aroused".<sup>41</sup>

Responses to her work, while mostly favourable, were mixed. Some suggested her initial success was fortuitous rather than earned: the result of her youth and sex, and the Prince of Wales' praise at the Academy.<sup>42</sup> They criticised such detail as horses' movement,<sup>43</sup> and suggested she would be unable to repeat the quality of the 'Roll Call' and her reputation would quickly collapse.<sup>44</sup> Her work was sometimes criticised, particularly from the 1890s. Early reviews, even when largely laudatory, criticised her colouring, and in 1882 the Art Journal claimed that in the 'Roll Call' and 'Balaclava', "the theatrical element forced itself to the front, and a prominence was imparted to ghastly realities of warfare which had hitherto been unattempted, but with which we are only now too familiar, thanks to the production of the French school".<sup>45</sup> In 1897 the Magazine of Art alleged she was a warning to women artists: "carried away by foolish applause and exaggerated praise...stunted in her artistic growth - her evolution as an artist fatally cut short." It condemned her 'Steady the Drums and Fifes!' as discreditable to the Academy, "a mere travesty of a painting".<sup>46</sup> In 1908 Sir James Caw compared her unfavourably to Robert Gibb and claimed that she, "despite her gifts, is apt to show herself the talented amateur".<sup>47</sup> Such criticism was from painterly criteria; not of her choice of subject, degree of realism, or for not showing the reality of war. Later the Connoisseur criticised her work for sometimes erring towards theatrical sentiment, especially 'After Balaclava' and 'Steady the Drums and Fifes!' They were unrealistic because they exaggerated British soldiers' failings. In the former she painted

the dazed exceptions, not the majority who were willing to charge again, and in the latter the soldiers appeared too nervous: "one can confidently argue that they presented a bolder front, for half their number fell on the field before the French left them in possession".<sup>48</sup> One unusual critic was her own husband. An idiosyncratic Gladstonian radical "political general" sympathetic to Zulus, Egyptians and Boers, he was critical of colonial war and from ideological motive disliked her colonial war pictures. He said of her 'Rorke's Drift', "One more picture like this and you will drive me mad", and loathed her Tel-el-Kebir picture 'After the Battle' telling her its subject, the slaughter of fellahin, was unfit for art.<sup>49</sup> However such criticism was exceptional. That a lady, who had never seen war or battle, should paint battle was, if initially with some surprise, accepted. Criticism was far outweighed by popularity and praise. 'Steady and Drums and Fifes!' was given a place of honour by the hanging committee, admired by the Prince of Wales and praised by Meynell as "one of the most important of her works".<sup>50</sup> She continued a successful military artist to the end of the Great War.<sup>51</sup> Like Villiers and Woodville, she portrayed the Great War as she had 19th century campaigns: she painted not gas on the Western Front but cavalry charges in the Near East.<sup>52</sup>

Matthew Lalumia in his 1983 Victorian Studies article, 'Realism and anti-aristocratic sentiment in Victorian depictions of the Crimean War' has related Elizabeth Butler's paintings to civilian criticism of army officers and demand for army reform.<sup>53</sup> He claimed that

at the time of the Crimean War the home-based artists, like Punch cartoonists, in their paintings no longer glorified generals but expressed criticism of aristocratic officers and praise and sympathy for other ranks, and especially for the wounded. He claimed that in the 1870s, at the time of the Cardwell reform debates and renewed controversy on the purchase of commissions, "a second generation of Crimean War paintings" by Elizabeth Butler - notably the 'Roll Call' and 'Balacclava' - further expressed sympathy and praise for common soldiers, implied criticism of aristocratic officer bunglers, and showed not military glory but the horror of war. However, his interpretation, and especially his suggestion that Lady Butler's paintings continued anti-aristocratic, anti-officer attitudes, is mistaken. Contemporaries, as the press comment showed, saw her paintings as portraying the horror, destruction and squalor of war, in contrast to "the conventional battle painters".<sup>54</sup> But they did not perceive them as showing the futility or ignobility of war. They still perceived the horror of war in the context of sacrifice, heroism and the, albeit regrettable, sometimes necessity of war. The greater the horror and destruction - as in the charge of the Light Brigade - the greater was the soldiers' nobility and heroism. Lady Butler's Crimean paintings should be perceived in the context of her other military paintings and of her attitudes, and of such facts that both Queen Victoria and Tom Taylor of The Times who admired her work, also admired the work of Caton Woodville.<sup>55</sup> Her paintings were not anti-officer. The most prominent figure in the 'Roll Call' was General Higginson, the leading figure in

'Scotland for Ever!' was an officer, and 'After the Battle' portrayed Wolseley as the central figure, the acclaimed heroic victor. Her 'Balaclava' was, in its lack of emphasis on officers, exceptional. Moreover in later 19th century battle pieces, such as Caton Woodville's, officers were again prominent, and heroic.

Her paintings were largely accurate in equine and matériel detail, though not always in battlefield condition of uniforms and equipment, which she portrayed as cleaner and smarter than in reality. For example, the Scots Greys at Waterloo had been soaked by rain and the dye from their jackets had run into their white belts, unlike in 'Scotland for Ever!'<sup>56</sup> Her paintings were dramatic and heroic. Though perceived by contemporaries as realistic and moving, in fact they romanticised battle and omitted its horror, the serious wounds and the agony of the wounded and dying. 'Scotland For Ever!' for example showed no wounds or blood and only two casualties, neither prominent, but merging into the charging mass. Contemporaries valued her work for its message of military qualities, nobility within war, and individual heroism. She was "the painter of heroes".<sup>57</sup> She portrayed war as many of her contemporaries perceived it: a warrior ethos, shown with pathos but without brutality or agony. Her influence is conjectural, but she both profited from and reinforced late 19th century popular militarism and the changed, if still ambivalent, attitudes to the army. Meynell claimed that, "Lady Butler has done for the soldier in Art what Mr. Kipling has done for him in Literature".<sup>58</sup> Her significance - the significance of

her works' popularity, praise and honour including from the military - was that she expressed the dominant view of war and was, as Meynell stated, "representative of her time".<sup>59</sup>

iii. ELIZABETH BUTLER: NOTES

1. My account of Elizabeth Butler is partly from Wilfrid Meynell, The Life and Work of Lady Butler (Art Annual, 1898); Elizabeth Butler, From Sketch-Book and Diary (1909); An Autobiography (1922); Michael Lee, 'A Centenary of Military Painting: The Life and Work of Elizabeth, Lady Butler', Army Quarterly XCV (1967); Germaine Greer, The Obstacle Race (1979). There is more written, during her life and since, on her than on any other Victorian battle painter. My account concentrates on values expressed and contemporaneous responses, previously not so fully considered.
2. Butler 46, 95.
3. Meynell 3.
4. Northern industrialists were major patrons of Victorian artists and she sold several works to them, but considered them hardly worth mentioning in her Autobiography.
5. Butler 95. Cf late 1920s, early '30s writing on the Great War.
6. Annual Register 1874, 366; obituary, Times 3 Oct 1933, 3.
7. Lee 93.
8. Meynell 6. On the fashion for collecting photographs of celebrities (300 to 400 million sold annually), H. & A. Gersheim, A Concise History of Photography (1971) 117-8.
9. MA ('81) xviii.
10. Lee 91.
11. Butler 95.
12. Meynell 6.
13. Wolseley to Louisa Wolseley, 17 Mar '85, Letters 207.
14. Meynell 11. On reproductions in an Australian military club, Graham McInnes, The Road to Gundagai (1965, '85) 231.

15. After the 'Roll Call''s success she sold two pictures for £1,200: 'Quatre Bras' for £1,126 to Mr. Galloway, 'The Return from Inkerman' for £3,000 to the Fine Art Society.
16. Bénézit claimed she was the English equivalent to Vernet, "le peintre populaire anglais", Bénézit X 160. G. Greer suggested she was, "perhaps the last European painter to catch the imagination of the masses".
17. The only other noteworthy British woman painter of war pictures was Lucy Kemp-Welch (1869-1958) who painted mainly other subjects, but a few war pictures at the turn of the century and during the Great War.
18. Armstrong AJ ('87) 176.
19. Butler 194.
20. Ib 331.
- 21-2. Obituary tribute, Times 4 Oct 1933, 17. Her religion contributed to her attitudes.
23. Butler 245.
24. Ib 168, 188.
25. Ib 47, 205.
26. Ib 142.
27. Diary 3 May 1875, quo ib 135.
28. Ib 46.
29. Ib 127, 138; Lee 90.
30. John Ruskin, Academy Notes (1875) quo Greer 84; Greer 84, 108.
31. Times 3 Oct 1933, 7.
32. Meynell 12.
33. AJ ('74) 163-4.
34. AR 1874 366.
35. AJ ('79) 173.



36. MA ('79-80) 278-9.
  37. AJ ('81) 185.
  38. MA ('81) 125.
  39. MA ('81) 304.
  40. AJ ('82) 211.
  41. AJ ('82) 352.
  - 42-3. AR 1884 366; Armstrong 176.
  44. AJ ('75) 220.
  45. AJ ('82) 352.
  46. MA ('97) 157. The picture was one of her favourites, and was acquired by the Regiment. Recent opinion of her work has been largely favourable e.g. Wood 76, Greer 83-4.
  47. James L. Gaw, Scottish Painting (1908) 267.
  48. Anon, 'The exhibition of naval and military works at the Guildhall', Connoisseur XLII (1915) 248. Cf Bénézit 160.
  49. E. McCourt, Remember Butler (1967) 140,158. Later she destroyed the painting.
  50. Butler 261, Meynell 16.
  51. Butler 321-31, Lee 94.
  52. Butler 329, 331, Lee 94.
  53. Matthew Lalumia, 'Realism and anti-aristocratic sentiment in Victorian depictions of the Crimean War', Vic.Stud. XXVII (1983) 25-51.
  54. Ib 50.
  55. Woodville 61,68-72,82.
  56. J. Keegan, The Face of Battle (1976 '78) 137; v his comments on 'Scotland for Ever!', plate 6. See also Boris Mollo, 'The Depiction of Uniform' in Usherwood& Spencer-Smit
  57. Meynell 8. Apparently she attempted to show the horror of war through facial expression(e.g. 'Roll Call','Balaclava')
  58. Ib 31. rather than wounds.
  59. Ib 30.
- CORRIGENDUM (to p 59) Contrary to Autobiography 102, 111, not E. Butler but Charles Galloway, purchaser of 'The Roll Call' sold its copyright, Paul Usherwood and Jenny Spencer-Smith, Lady Butler: Battle Artist 1846-1933(N.A.M. 1987) 42-3.

#### iv. CATON WOODVILLE

Another leading battle painter and war illustrator was Richard Caton Woodville (1856-1927).<sup>1</sup> He was born in London, the son of an American artist of "English extraction" and his half-German, half-Russian wife, also an artist. Woodville studied painting and fought duels in Dusseldorf, and his German experience may have influenced him towards militarism. He wrote that, "I was brought up in the midst of Biblical art, but I soon turned from it to battle pictures, for I had always taken the keenest interest in military matters".<sup>2</sup> He then travelled in the barbaric Balkans, by his own account at great risk of murder. Back in London in 1877 at the time of the Russo-Turkish War, "when the British public was taking one of its periodic fits of interest in battle paintings and drawings", he offered a drawing to the Illustrated London News, "the foremost illustrated journal in the world".<sup>3</sup> Its proprietor, William Ingram, liked his work, employed him and became a close friend, and he continued on the staff of the I.L.N. for almost his entire working life,<sup>4</sup> frequently contributing full-page and double-page drawings, on a limited range of subjects. He did not portray the impoverished, insubordinate or humdrum, and very seldom the humorous. He was essentially, like the I.L.N. a chronicler and celebrator of the Establishment. He portrayed 'Society': the sleek and glossy rich with their rounded statuesque women, amusing themselves at Henley, skating or at balls. He portrayed Prince Victor's coming-of-age ball at Sandringham, and the Artists' Costume Ball at Prince's Hall with the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Prince portrayed

flatteringly less corpulent than the real 'Tum Tum'.<sup>5</sup> The I.L.N. published fiction in its Christmas and Summer issues, and he illustrated some of its historical romances with swashbuckling scenes, and the western fiction of Bret Harte with galloping cowboys. He also portrayed some foreign events, especially German. He drew a full-paged equestrian portrait of Bismarck, with a background of massed troops, for the obituary supplement, and in 1898 drew Wilhelm II, staring, helmeted and white-cloaked, riding imperiously with his entourage into Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> However it was as a military and war artist that he was most employed and became best known. The I.L.N. also used other military artists, but published more of his work than that of any other home-based military artist, and because of its quality, especially its vividness, and its quantity, he became probably the most influential of the illustrated press military artists. Probably more than any other artist he formed the public's image of war, before 1914.

He drew imaginative reconstructions based in varying degrees on imagination, special artists' and others' sketches and photographs, his own observations, and information available to him in London. He occasionally drew foreign conflicts: redskins galloping to attack a mailcoach by moonlight, Spanish troops and Riff fighting in Morocco, cossacks in Central Asia. Mostly, however, he drew British imperial forces. He portrayed the Zulu War and the death of the Prince Imperial. He drew royal reviews and a long series of reconstructions of 'Battles of the British Army', showing victories from the 17th to the 19th century, for example,

Wolfe climbing the Heights of Abraham, and highlanders with broadswords about to charge the French. As 'Our Special Artist' in Egypt in 1882, arriving after the fighting, he portrayed celebrated charges or imagined dramatic episodes of the campaign, usually with mounted troops or highlanders. He portrayed Tel-el-Kebir on a special four-page foldout supplement; close-packed heroic highlanders charging an Egyptian battery.<sup>7</sup> Back in England in 1885 he portrayed the Sudan campaign, largely with dramatic incidents of mounted troops. He drew, for example, 'An affair with outposts'; British cavalry with rearing horses and flashing swords, attacking Mahdists at a waterhole.<sup>8</sup> He drew 'A convoy of wounded', the wounded riding on horses and supported by walking soldiers: the wounds were hardly shown, conventionalised, without horror or agony.<sup>9</sup> He drew 'War in the desert': a running fight, a fast-moving scene of camel-mounted British pursuing camel-mounted arabs, racing alongside and aiming at each other: again a dramatic composition, with heroic British and staring eyes.<sup>10</sup> He portrayed the Matabele War, the Chitral campaign, the Sudan reconquest and the Boer War, with repeated dramatic scenes of charges and close-packed mêlées. He drew the Gordons charging at Elandslaagte amid exploding shells and rearing horses. He drew the 5th Lancers charging at Elandslaagte: a dramatic, packed mass of men and horses with Bugler Sherlock firing, and a Boer being speared.<sup>11</sup> He drew 'A Night Attack': close-bunched infantry, dramatically grouped, led by a prominent officer with drawn sword and revolver, advancing across rocks, under fire.<sup>12</sup> Some were falling, but again there was no agony, and only conventional wounds. He drew

'Boer Tactics', Boers using a white flag to lure British troops; a Boer wearing a red cross armband waving a white flag while near him, hidden bunched implausibly close behind rocks, Boers waited to fire on British troops, advancing in the background, implausibly close to the Boers.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to his I.L.N. work, he was also at the same time a successful painter. As in the I.L.N., on canvas he portrayed, largely from imagination, heroic incidents of British wars, historical and contemporary. As well as his battle pieces, by which he was best known, he painted "cabinet-sized single figure subjects, which, in their careful manner and high finish, were rather suggestive of Meissonier,"<sup>14</sup> and occasionally other genre, for example, 'Trial of a Woman taken in Adultery'. At the 1879 Academy he "first came to the front with his picture of Frederick the Great before Leuthen" which was praised by Tom Taylor in the Times.<sup>15</sup> From then on he exhibited there annually, almost all war scenes, and later some royalty. His success led in 1882 to a commission from the Fine Art Society, publishers of reproductions including of Lady Butler's work, to paint the charge of the Household Brigade at Kassassin. In Egypt for this, he designed uniforms for the new Egyptian army and was commissioned by Queen Victoria to paint the Duke of Connaught and the Guards at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir: presumably intended partly for her plan to have Connaught ultimately succeed Cambridge as Commander-in-Chief.<sup>16</sup> The painting of Connaught on horseback at the head of his men, pleased the Queen and was exhibited at the Academy inscribed "painted for H.M. the Queen".<sup>17</sup> This led

to further royal commissions, including painting the wedding of Princess Beatrice in 1885, and Victoria, Edward VII and George V continued to favour him. Despite an ancestor who signed the American declaration of independence, he proved an accomplished courtier and was rewarded by a place in the suite of Prince Albert Victor when he visited India. Albert Victor, nicknamed 'Collars and Cuffs' was educationally backward, lethargic and so scandalously dissipated that it has been alleged he was Jack the Ripper. Woodville, however in his memoirs omitted this and wrote of him in terms used by non-courtiers for persons worthy of respect; and he continued to paint royal portraits. He gained further commissions from Indian princes and Austrian and other foreign royalty. His success promoted by royal approval, he commanded high prices: over a thousand pounds a canvas. He also continued to work for the I.L.N. as a London-based artist, not a special war artist. He was a dapper man-about-town and clubman with waxed moustaches and a house and studio in the fashionable artists' quarter of St. John's Wood.<sup>18</sup> Though he chose to omit it from Who's Who and from his memoirs, he was married, with a son who also became an artist and illustrator.<sup>19</sup> He moved with a fast bohemian and sporting set and, like successful specials, shared the values and tastes of regular officers and got on well with them. He enjoyed drinking, spearing boars and shooting elephants and other big game, and he wrote articles on sport and travel. He wrote that, "Sport with gun and rod became a mania with me, and my collection of sporting guns and rifles as well as fishing rods became daily larger".<sup>20</sup> He was an enthusiastic imperialist and eulogised British rule in India: "Nobody

knows what England's power means until has he seen India. Our splendid Indian soldiers are the envy of every nation; the roads of the empire are unequalled, and its public buildings are magnificent".<sup>21</sup> He shared contemporary hostility to miscegenation, and warned against English girls marrying Indians,

"It is shameful how many young English girls are misled by these Indian students who come over here with lies about their nobility and riches, and are persuaded to throw their lot in with these men, only to learn on reaching India and their 'husband's' home, how shamefully they have been hoodwinked. The wives of the man into whose zenana they are forced, or the husband himself when tired of them, soon put them out of their way, mostly by doses of finely chopped bamboo in their food, which causes them to die in the greatest agony. The life of English girls who marry natives is seldom longer than two or three years after reaching India".<sup>22</sup>

From 1879 he served as a Yeomanry officer and acquired, "knowledge useful to painter of military pictures".<sup>23</sup> His training included, "our duty in aid of the civic power": he commented that, "This has not been done since the bread riots in the early nineteenth century at Manchester, for the riots were suppressed by the yeomanry so absolutely thoroughly that the authorities have since not dared to repeat the experiment".<sup>24</sup> He was tough-minded and brave, sometimes jocularly callous, and,

as he proudly recounted in his memoirs, repeatedly risked danger and had hair-breadth escapes from death, in duelling, the Balkans and hunting in Morocco. Though he visited various campaigns he nevertheless, to his disappointment, was never in battle. In Who's Who and elsewhere he suggested but did not specifically claim battle experience and as Villiers noted, "never witnessed a shot fired in anger".<sup>25</sup> His work was popular and he became celebrated as a battle painter. His paintings included dramatic incidents from the Napoleonic wars, the Crimea, the Mutiny, the Afghan War - his 'Maiwand: Saving the Guns' (1882) was probably his best-known picture and was much praised - the Egyptian campaign and the Gordon relief expedition. In 1898 he painted '"The Cock O' the North": storming of Dargai heights by the 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders'. He painted the charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman, and well-known incidents from the Boer War including, 'A Chip of the Old Block', Bugler Sherlock with the 5th Lancers charging at Elands-laagte,<sup>26</sup> '"The Last Shot at Colenso", Lieutenant Roberts earns his V.C.' and 'All that was Left of Them', the heroic last stand in 1901 of C Squadron, 17th Lancers, commissioned by the Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News and published with its 1902 Christmas issue.<sup>27</sup> These were reproduced as large photogravures, oleolithographs and chromolithographs. He also drew the 'Absent-Minded Beggar' used by the "Absent-Minded Beggar" Fund to accompany Kipling's verse. It was much reproduced in different media - including medals, wall plaques, ceramic figurines and Mappin and Webb bronzes "in the well-known khaki tint"<sup>28</sup> - and became for contemporaries an enduring



image from the war, "everywhere remembered".<sup>29</sup> His I.L.N. pictures were reprinted in the popular Harmsworth "instant history" With the Flag to Pretoria, and his portrayals influenced those of other artists who exploited the illustrated press demand for pictures of the war. Indicative of his perception of war as picturesque spectacle was his dislike of the service dress introduced after the Boer War: he wrote in 1913, "our men in service kit remind one of navvies with a dash of the convict about them".<sup>30</sup> The Great War he portrayed for the I.L.N. as he had earlier wars: again highlanders, cavalry, dramatic charges and heroic stands.<sup>31</sup> Throughout the war and after, he continued to exhibit at the Academy battle paintings: in 1918, for example, 'The 2nd Battalion Manchester Regiment taking six German field-guns near St. Quentin'.<sup>32</sup> After Villiers' death in 1922 he was regarded as, "the last of the famous war artists of the older school".<sup>33</sup> In 1927 his last major painting 'Hallow-e'en: Stand of the London Scottish on Messines Ridge', was hung in the Academy, and by royal command at Buckingham Palace.<sup>34</sup> Soon after this - old, ill, depressed, afraid of being an invalid and believing himself "a finished man", he shot himself.<sup>35</sup>

Known as "a Bohemian with a brush" and "a true Bohemian of the old school", he nevertheless researched to meticulous accuracy the minutiae of military material which so obsessed his royal patrons.<sup>36</sup> He preferred not to use living models, worked quickly, and tended to leave commissions to the last moment, then rush them.<sup>37</sup> His style was distinctive. His I.L.N. drawings were clean-

lined and carefully finished, contrasting with the sketchy smudgy style some favoured.<sup>38</sup> His were the most dramatic, and strained, of the British battle pictures. His paintings were more detailed, more finished and less impressionistic than others', though not than Lady Butler's or G.D.Giles'. His pictures were dynamic and picturesque, the men grouped and posed with eyes staring, defiant, lunging and thrusting, swords and bayonets flashing, movement and excitement, little blood, conventionalised wounds and no agony. He showed the British as dominant and triumphant - or, exceptionally, in a heroic last stand, even in campaigns that were, when he drew, not successful. His 1882 I.L.N. drawing 'Surrender' was typical; a shifty cringeing Egyptian infantryman surrendering to a mounted British cavalry trooper pointing a cocked revolver at his head.<sup>39</sup> His 1889 drawing 'Capturing enemy supplies' showed British cavalry galloping with drawn swords towards arabs grouped by laden camels, surrendering.<sup>40</sup> In November 1899 he drew dejected Boer prisoners guarded by heroic, moustached slouch-hatted mounted imperial troops.<sup>41</sup> His British were tall and soldierly, their horses magnificent and high-spirited. They were masterful, sometimes imperious, with panache and never scruffy; if sometimes rather theatrical and given to redundant gesture such as painting dramatically towards a close and very obvious enemy.<sup>42</sup> He showed officers as prominent and heroic and portrayed such military celebrities as White and Baden-Powell as impressive and heroic. His soldiers seldom took cover but bunched and skylined picturesquely, even in the Boer War, and even when they lay prone on the veld they still bunched close together.

His 1894 I.L.N. double-page drawing 'A Critical Moment' was typical: a few heroic, closely-grouped, moustached and slouch-hatted Rhodesians outnumbered by a mass of Matabele warriors - an archetypal image of colonial war.<sup>43</sup> When in 1899 he portrayed Baden-Powell as 'The Defender of Mafeking' it was by a conventional dramatic cavalry portrayal, with Baden-Powell on a galloping horse, waving his sword in the air, leading a charge.<sup>44</sup> The classic iconography of late 19th century British imperialism was the work of Illustrated London News artists and pre-eminently of Caton Woodville.

The late Victorian imperial "hero of heroes" was Gordon, and memories of him revived with the reconquest of the Sudan. While for Salisbury and the "official mind" the reconquest was primarily the implementation of their defensive Nile valley strategy, for many British it was, as Villiers wrote, "Kitchener's expedition...to avenge the death of General Charles Gordon" and the continuation of his crusade.<sup>45</sup> Woodville painted several pictures of the Sudan campaign. The Queen had long been emotionally involved with Gordon's fate, and kept his Bible in an enamel and crystal casket beside a marble bust of him: after the memorial service at Khartoum she wrote in her journal, "Surely he is avenged".<sup>46</sup> At the Queen's request, Woodville in 1899 painted the Gordon memorial service at Khartoum. He also expressed the emotional imperialist attitude to Gordon in another, symbolic painting for the Queen. In May 1899 Sir Almeric Fitzroy saw it displayed at Windsor Castle, and described it in his diary,

"Caton Woodville's picture, 'At Last', was on view

in the great corridor. Across the waste of desert lies the British bivouac after Omdurman beneath the star-strewn canopy of an African sky. The thin columns of smoke rising perpendicularly from the camp-fires express eloquently the stillness of the atmosphere; one or two Highland soldiers sentinel the foreground, and in the extreme distance a lurid glare hangs over Omdurman...But these are only accessories: in middle air, just above the sleeping host, extended in the arms of three celestial bearers, is the body of the heroic Gordon passing to its eternal rest. A symbol of struggle tranquillised by achievement, of death that receives a higher consideration from the delay of its reward, of apotheosis that will endure, and form part of the nation's panoply, as it awaits the trials that are to come".<sup>47</sup>

Woodville himself asserted the ideological role of his military genre and in his memoirs, noting how many of his pictures had been exported, complained of British indifference to military pictures, in contrast to continental enthusiasm.

"It is a curious thing how little the English public care for military pictures...After such a war as ours in South Africa, if it had been fought by the French or the Germans, one would have seen miles of

canvas covered with the brave deeds done by their soldiers, to teach the heroic history of the army to the future generations and to inoculate them with the spirit of the defence of their countries".<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, he was fortunate in working when British enthusiasm for military art was probably at its zenith, and his career was another example of the rewards, financial and social, than attainable by the successful battle painter. Like the specials, he was not modest: in Who's Who and his memoirs he asserted his foreign decorations.

His work was sometimes criticised. One critic called it, "an artist's victory over many a British defeat,"<sup>49</sup> and in 1883 the Magazine of Art reviewing the Fine Art Society's exhibition of paintings of the Egyptian war, condemned his Kassassin as, "an ill-considered nightmare...its draughtsmanship is melodramatic, its colour is far more ingenious than real".<sup>50</sup> In 1908 Sir James Caw claimed his battle paintings were vivacious and immediately effective, but that his "chic and easy method is frequently suggestive of the hurry of the weekly illustration".<sup>51</sup> Later the Connoisseur claimed that though he put plenty of energy into his painting of the 2nd Manchesters, "his combatants are rather of the stage than the battlefield, each strenuously exerting himself with voice and weapon at the same moment in order to make as much tumult as possible."<sup>52</sup> Despite such criticism, and some inaccuracies, his work continued popular. His style was imitated by other artists working for the illustrated press, especially those

whom the Boer War gave unwonted opportunity for war pictures, and his pictures were crudely copied for magic lantern slides.<sup>53</sup> His pictures were used in Cassell's British Battles on Land and Sea and other popular histories and encyclopedias, becoming for millions their unquestioned image of historical reality.<sup>54</sup> Many admired his work, professional soldiers admired its accuracy of detail, its colour and movement.<sup>55</sup> Foreign governments honoured it by decorations, including the French *Palmes académiques* for his Napoleonic battle scenes. Millais praised it and said he should be an R.A., and in 1882 he was elected R.I.<sup>56</sup> He was praised as 'the English Meissonier'.<sup>57</sup> In his 1887 Jubilee evaluation of British art, Walter Armstrong wrote of the battle painters who followed Lady Butler: "Of these certainly the most gifted is Mr. Caton Woodville whose 'Saving the Guns, Maiwand' and 'Kassassin' are among the ablest pictures of battle our day has produced".<sup>58</sup> In 1897 the Art Journal praised his "remarkable power."<sup>59</sup> In 1900 the Illustrated London News praised his 'Gordon Memorial Service': "Lord Kitchener has never been portrayed in a more impressive picture".<sup>60</sup> Later the Connoisseur praised his 'Maiwand' as, "most spirited...it realises the movement and action of frantically galloping horses with a vigour that carries conviction."<sup>61</sup> Villiers claimed he was the best British battle painter and wrote that, "Next to de Neuville and Verestchagin the greatest painter of war pictures is undoubtedly Mr. Caton Woodville...in his pictures is all the real dash and movement of war".<sup>62</sup> It was war as his contemporaries perceived it.

iv. CATON WOODVILLE: NOTES

1. My account of Woodville is partly from his memoirs, R. Caton Woodville, Random Recollections (1913). Prints and photographs of his paintings are at the N.A.M.
2. Woodville 12.
3. Ib 12,121.
4. ILN 27 Aug 1927, 326.
5. ILN LXXXVI (17 Jan 1885) Supplement; ib (30 May '85) 554-5.
6. Ib CXIII (19 Nov '98) 727.
7. Ib LXXXI (30 Sept '82) Supplement.
8. Ib LXXXVI (3 Jan '85) 20-1.
9. Ib (7 Feb '85) 143.
10. Ib (7 Feb '85) 154-5.
11. Ib.CXV (25 Nov '99) Sup. iv-v.
12. Ib (11 Dec '99) 914-5.
13. Ib (9 Dec '97) 827.
14. Obituary, Connoisseur LXXIX (Oct 1927). Hereafter cited as Con.
15. Anon. 'The Exhibition at the Royal Academy', AJ ('82) 212; Woodville 82.
16. Hamer, British Army 161.
17. Graves VIII 350; George Aston, H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught and Strathearn (1929) 139.
18. He earlier had studios in Kensington and Chelsea, Graves VIII 349-50.
19. William P. Caton Woodville, born 1884.
20. Woodville 239.
21. Ib 100.
22. Ib 98.
23. Ib 258.
24. Ib 261.
25. Villiers, Personalities 24.

26. Bugler Sherlock, aged 14 years, charged with his squadron, shooting three Boers with his revolver: the "plucky little fellow" was featured in the press as a hero, ILN CXV ('99) 645.
27. The painting, presented by ILN proprietors to the Regiment, is now at the Regimental Museum, Belvoir Castle.
28. D. Edmonds, 'The Absent-Minded Beggar Medal', N.A.M. Annual Report 1969-70, 12-13; N.J. Arch, 'Potted History', ib 1972-1973, 16; Filemonena, 'Ladies' Page' ILN CCVI (27 Jan 1900) 126. The bronzes cost £3 10s of which 25% was donated to the Daily Mail War Fund. There was later a toy-soldier version, Andrew Rose, Toy Soldiers (1985) 99.
29. Obit, Con.127.
30. Woodville 264; cf Butler 325.
31. See ILN (27 Aug 1927) 335; Terraine, Impacts of War 100-1. On their unreality v Holmes, Firing Line 63. John Keegan called them, "some of the most grotesque examples of military art ever published", Nature of War 190.
32. Anon, 'Royal Academy Exhibition', Con LI (1918) 110.
33. ILN (27 Aug 1927) 334. Though the last leading 19th century illustrated-press war illustrator, he was outlived by Gibb and E. Butler.
34. Obit, Con 128; obit, Times (18 Aug 1927) 12.
35. Report of inquest, Times (22 Aug 1927) 7.
36. Obit, Con, 127; obit, Times 12.
37. Obit, Con, 127.
38. During the Boer War, drawing often for the ILN, some of his work was much inferior to his best, relatively crude and lifeless e.g. ILN CXV (20 Jan 1900) 86-7; (24 Mar) second sup. iii.
39. ILN LXXXI (16 Sept '82) 301.
40. Ib LXXXVI (31 Jan '85) 110-11.
41. Ib CXV (18 Nov '99) ii.
42. e.g. Ib CIII (25 Nov '95) 737-8.



43. ILN CIV (27 Jan '94) 112-3. Though not so named, apparently portraying the last stand of Wilson's Shangani patrol in November 1893 which became symbolic for white Rhodesians.
44. ILN CXV (21 Oct '99) 567.
45. Villiers, Villiers II 259.
46. (ed) M.A. Gordon, Letters of General Gordon to his Sister (1888) xvii-xix; Victoria quo Alan Moorehead, The White Nile (1960) 338.
47. Almeric FitzRoy, Memoirs (nd) I 17.
48. Woodville 79. Cf AJ ('64) 42.
49. Quo Hogarth, Artist as reporter 57.
50. AJ ('83) XXX.
51. J.L. Caw, Scottish Painting (1908) 266-7.
52. 'Royal Academy Exhibition', Con LI (1918) 110.
53. Cliffe Castle, Keighley, W. Yorks.
54. H.W. Wilson, With the Flag to Pretoria (1900-1); After Pretoria: The Guerilla War (1902); Japan's Fight For Freedom (1904-6); Harmsworth's Universal Encyclopedia (nd).
55. Obit, Times, 12; ILN (27 Aug 1927) 326.
56. Gaunt, Pre-Raphaelite 147; Member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours.
57. Obit, Times, 12; ILN (27 Aug 1927) 32.
58. W. Armstrong, 'Victorian Fine Art', Jubilee Number, AJ ('87) 176. 'Maiwand' was also praised in AJ ('82) 212.
59. AJ ('97) 254; another example of art-press praise AJ ('82) 212; also praised in A.C.R. Carter, The Work of the War Artists in South Africa (Art Annual 1900) 2, 24.
60. ILN CXVI (20 Jan 1900) 73.
61. Anon, 'The exhibition of naval and military works at the Guildhall', Con XLII (1915) 248.
62. Villiers, Personalities 24.

## V. ROBERT GIBB

Scotland had a proud military tradition and in the 19th century, following the lead of George IV and Victoria, the highlanders, formerly despised as barbaric, became for the English and lowland Scots romantically fashionable. New tartans were invented and Wilhelm II dressed himself in tartan as an, albeit Wagnerian, Scottish chief. Scottish military enthusiasm was shown by the disproportionately high number of Scots in the Volunteers.<sup>1</sup> Scottish regiments were prominent in 19th century wars and, much featured in the press, became royal and popular favourites, to the annoyance of English county regiments.<sup>2</sup> After Dargai a private of the Derbyshire Regiment wrote, "They will praise the kilt regiment. It's no use an English regiment trying to get on when there is a regiment with the kilts".<sup>3</sup> The Irish contribution, despite Kipling's 'Soldiers Three', never similarly captured the popular imagination.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on highland regiments was continued by special war artists and battle painters. Scotland had its own art institutions, largely centred in Edinburgh and led by the Royal Scottish Academy, and in the 19th century painting flourished.<sup>5</sup> The subjects favoured were similar to those at Burlington House: landscape, 'genre', classical and portrait. It was indicative of the attitudes of British artists that, despite Scottish military pride, there were almost no Scottish battle painters. The only notable Scottish battle painter was Robert Gibb (1845-1932).<sup>6</sup> As Sir James Caw wrote, "Robert Gibb, taking the exploits of the Scottish regiments as motives for a series of powerful

battle-pictures, struck a patriotic vein of his own".<sup>7</sup>

Robert Gibb's career followed a pattern common with successful professional artists, though typically of Scotland with its more open and meritocratic society, his family origin was socio-economically lower than that of many English artists. The son of a builder, he was apprenticed as a lithographer, then art-trained at the Life School of the Royal Scottish Academy. In the 1860s and '70s he painted romantic genre, literary and historical scenes such as 'The Death of Marmion' (1873) and 'The Death of St. Columba' (1876). He also, like many other professional artists, painted portraits: an important source of income and useful contacts. In 1878, several years after Elizabeth Butler's much-publicised initial success, and the year of the Russian war scare and jingoism, he began to paint battle pictures. Like Elizabeth Butler he chose Crimean scenes, which he meticulously researched with reading, veterans, uniforms and accoutrements. His 1878 'Comrades' was followed in 1881 by 'The Thin Red Line', inspired by his reading Kinglake. Like the 'Roll Call', this picture was a sensational success, and established his reputation. Exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy it caused a "furore", and secured his election to full membership of the Academy. The art press praised it. The Art Journal stated that "the first place in the collection is taken by 'The Thin Red Line'", praised its detail and intensity and noted, approving, that "the actual horrors of war are not made prominent".<sup>8</sup> George Halkett wrote in the Magazine of Art that it was "the success of the year": its subject

"intensely dramatic" yet wisely avoiding melodrama by "reticence in the ghastly parts of the picture": it "will compare with the best work in a similar vein".<sup>9</sup> Exhibited in 1882 at Burlington House, in the same exhibition as Mrs. Butler's 'Floreat Etona!', it was further praised. "Sent on tour, it carried his name far and wide",<sup>10</sup> and many engravings of it were sold. It remained his most popular picture. It was praised for its ideological and inspirational message: "this wall of brave men, this sentiment so nobly expressed".<sup>11</sup> Its lasting popularity probably resulted from its vividly expressing a Victorian national myth: the heroic, morally-superior British few defeating the numerically superior enemy.

From then on he painted, intermittently, battle scenes, though these remained a minority - only five from 1881 to 1916 - of the works he exhibited which were mostly portraits with some historical, genre and scenes of Egypt. Yet it was these few battle paintings which won him fame, and on which contemporary critiques of his work concentrated.<sup>12</sup> He painted scenes of the Crimea, Waterloo and, with 'Dargai', of recent imperial war. They continued successful; for example in 1900 at the Royal Scottish Academy, as the Art Journal noted, "Mr. Gibb's large, stirring battle piece, 'Saving the Colours', has been viewed with great admiration".<sup>13</sup> 'Dargai', with its subtle tone of blue carried throughout the picture, was considered by critics artistically superior though, as the Connoisseur commented it would, "probably never secure the same popularity as 'The Thin Red Line' or 'Saving the Colours' in which the human interest is more

strongly emphasised".<sup>14</sup> His paintings were of infantry, usually highlanders, in battle "in their moments of sharpest trial";<sup>15</sup> in colourful, thrilling, dramatic episodes. He emphasised individual and group heroism, self-sacrifice and comradeship. He portrayed, "the human and pathetic side of war, as well as its patriotic aspects".<sup>16</sup> He portrayed pathos but, like Elizabeth Butler and Caton Woodville, he conventionalised wounds and death, and did not portray the sordidness, horror, or agony of war. He was highly regarded by contemporaries, and praised by critics. They noted that he lacked war experience, but praised his observation, thorough research, "clearness of statement and truthfulness of detail" such as worn and soiled uniforms, and "the sense of reality he conveys", and claimed he had "caught the spirit of the scenes he has depicted".<sup>17</sup> W.M. Gilbert praised his "strong patriotic feeling" and claimed it contributed to the success of his paintings.<sup>18</sup> Sir James Caw emphasised the ideological factor: "In the class of picture to which he is chiefly devoted purely aesthetic qualities are less important, however, than clear setting forth of the chosen incident, pictorial realisation of the heroic spirit of a courageous act, and appeal to the patriotic emotions: and in these respects he never fails".<sup>19</sup> Caw, a fellow Scot and Director of the National Galleries of Scotland, claimed that Gibb, though inferior in some aspects to De Neuville and Detaille, was the only British battle painter "who can be compared with the military painters of France", and that he was superior to the other British battle painters: less pathetic than Lady Butler,

less "vivacious and immediately effective" than Woodville, but more powerful and realistic, and technically superior, to either.<sup>20</sup> Recognised as a leading Scottish painter, he was rewarded by official posts: in 1895 Keeper of the Scottish National Gallery, and in 1908 His Majesty's Limner for Scotland. His battle painting was popular and brought him fame and success. Yet despite this, he remained the only notable Scottish battle painter; indicative of the differing attitudes, as in England, of artists and of the public.

V. ROBERT GIBB: NOTES

1. H. Cunningham, The Volunteer Force (1975) 46-8. However in the regular army Scots were underrepresented relative to population, H.J. Hanham, 'Religion and Nationality in the Mid-Victorian Army' in (ed) M.R.D. Foot, War and Society (1973) 163; A.R. Skelley, The Victorian Army at Home (1977) 288.
2. Linesman, Words by an Eyewitness (1901) 142; Hanham 165; Britain's toy soldiers.
3. Quo J. Laffin, Scotland the Brave (1963) 38.
4. Irish were overrepresented in the regular army, relative to population, Hanham 161-7, Skelley 285-7.
5. Caw 204-17; E. Gordon, The Royal Scottish Academy (1976) passim.
6. My account of Gibb is largely from W. Matthews Gilbert, 'Robert Gibb, R.S.A.', A.J. ('97) 25-8; Caw 266-7; Wood 173.
7. Caw 480.
8. AJ ('81) 123. Cf AJ ('82) 210.
9. George R. Halkett, 'The Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition', MA ('81) 263.
10. Caw 266.
11. Gilbert 28.
12. F. Rider, The Royal Scottish Academy: A Complete List of Exhibited Works, (1917,1975) 121; Graves II 227.
13. AJ (1900) 127.
14. Anon, 'The exhibition of naval and military works at the Guildhall', Con XLII (1915) 248.
15. Caw 266.
16. Gilbert 28.
17. Ib 26, Caw 267, Gilbert 27.
18. Gilbert 27.
- 19-20. Caw 267.

The few British battle painters who had battle experience had almost all gained it as special war artists for the illustrated papers. One such was Charles Edwin Fripp (1854-1906)<sup>1</sup>. Son of the landscape painter George Fripp, he studied painting at Nuremberg and the Royal Academy, Munich, and became a special artist for the Graphic, and later the Daily Graphic, covering the 9th Kaffir War, the Zulu War, the 1st Boer War, the Suakin campaign, the Sino-Japanese War, the Matabele Rebellion, the Spanish-American War and the Boer War. Like Woodville and other special artists he shared the attitudes and tastes of the officers with whom he campaigned: he was a keen footballer and big-game hunter. In 1883 H.V. Barnett in the Magazine of Art praised his Zulu War sketches: "The battle with all its romance and motion, its incidents and excitements, its contrasts and amazing din, is delineated quite as fully as need ..Mr. Fripp...is one of the ablest of figure-draughtsmen; his South African sketches show a notable grasp of character, both individual and racial".<sup>2</sup> He used his war experience and sketches in his battle paintings, and exhibited at the Royal Water Colour Society and occasionally at the Academy. His most famous painting was the much reproduced 'Last Stand at Isandhlula' exhibited at the Academy in 1885. In 1886 he exhibited 'The attack on General Sir John McNeill's force near Suakim': a scene from the battle of Tofrek in 1885, a dramatic desert mêlée of British troops in grey and khaki, fighting Hadendowa. The Art Journal praised it as



"true and life-like".<sup>3</sup> Despite his battle experience, he followed the conventions of Victorian battle painting, showing few British dead or dying, little blood, few and conventionalised wounds, and no horror or agony. Battle was colourful, exciting, dramatic and heroic. As Michael Barthorp has recently noted, he was "an accurate and diligent illustrator of the fighting dress and equipment of the late Victorian soldier".<sup>4</sup> He was among the last of the Victorian battle painters but because he exhibited so few major canvases - though they were praised by the art press - he was less known than Lady Butler or Woodville and was largely ignored in contemporary descriptions of the genre: neither Armstrong in 1887 nor Spielmann in 1911 mentioned him.

Edward Matthew Hale (1852-1924)<sup>5</sup> studied painting in Paris under Cabanel and Carolus-Duran,<sup>6</sup> was an I.L.N. special artist in the Russo-Turkish and Afghan wars, then worked in England as a genre painter, largely of army life and of the sea, with some classical scenes in the style of Alma-Tadema. He exhibited at the Academy and several London galleries. His battle pictures were largely drawn from his experience in India and Afghanistan, and included 'The Drums of the Fore and Aft' and 'The Return of the Fore and Aft', and 'Piper Findlater, Gordon Highlanders, winning the V.C. at Dargai'. He tended to emphasise individual heroism, so giving his work more popular appeal. Though competent, his work was less finished and less dramatic than Lady Butler's or Woodville's. Like them he followed the conventions of Victorian battle painting. An inferior

painter, he was among the less reproduced and less known battle painters.

Topography was a military study and from the 1740s landscape painting was part of the Woolwich curriculum, and there was also a tradition of officer amateur painters. Occasionally, as with T.S. Seccombe, an officer became a professional artist. One such was Godfrey Douglas Giles (1857-1941).<sup>7</sup> Born in Karachi, son of an officer in the Indian Navy, and educated at Cheltenham and Sandhurst, he joined the Indian Army, served in the Afghan War, was seconded to the Egyptian army and fought at El Teb. He left the army in 1884 and studied painting in Paris under Carolus-Duran. He became a successful painter of horses, hunting, racing and military scenes, and exhibited at the Academy, the Royal Scottish Academy and the Salon, and at various London and provincial galleries. He painted battle scenes initially from his experience in the Sudan; in 1884 and 1887 two scenes of the battle of Tamai, and in 1886 the 19th Hussars' charge at El Teb. The late 19th century popular interest in the army led to numerous illustrations of its uniforms, notably those by Richard Simkin, and J.S. Virtue, publishers to the Art Journal, commissioned a series from Giles which was published in 1890 as chromolithographs in Her Majesty's Army.<sup>8</sup> In 1899 he painted 'After the Battle of Atbara', the Emir Mahmud prisoner before Kitchener, and published photo-gravure reproductions. His military paintings were praised by the art press and favoured by patrons. His 'Charge of the 19th (Princess of Wales') Hussars at El-

Teb', praised by the Art Journal as "true and life-like",<sup>9</sup> was presented by the Princess of Wales to the regiment, and his 'A patrol of the 10th Hussars pursuing Boers' was presented by the Duke of Portland to the regiment. He usually painted in a clear, hard, almost harsh quasi-photographic style similar to Woodville's in the same period, but his pictures - for example those of Tamai - tended to diffuseness of subject, lacking a focus of interest. Though realistically representing battle, this was artistically less effective and lacked the impact of Lady Butler's or Woodville's careful composition and grouping. Like them, he followed the genre's conventions. He was one of the lesser-known battle painters. He was successful but never achieved the fame of Lady Butler or Woodville - and was ignored by both Armstrong and Spielmann - probably because his work was less dramatic and had less emphasis on individual heroism; because, unlike Lady Butler, he never achieved the celebrity of a popular Academy favourite picture; and because, unlike Woodville, he painted relatively few military paintings and his work was little reproduced.

For some artists who came from non-military families, like Elizabeth Butler, battle-painting led to involvement with soldiers. For others, a military background apparently led to battle painting. One such was William Barnes Wollen (1857-1936) who was "intended for the army but took up art instead".<sup>10</sup> He studied at the Slade and became a professional painter of portraits, sporting and military scenes. He drew occasional hunting scenes and some

military reconstructions for the Illustrated London News and in 1900 was a special artist for the Sphere in South Africa. He was a prolific military artist from the '80s to the 1920s, painting scenes from the Napoleonic wars, colonial campaigns, the Boer War and the Great War. These included 'Waterloo', 'The last stand of the 44th Regiment at Gundamuck, 1842', 'The Rescue of Private Andrews by Captain Garnet Wolseley at the Storming of the Motee Mahal, Lucknow', 'The 21st (Empress of India's) Lancers at Omdurman', and 'The Imperial Light Horse at Waggon Hill'. He exhibited from 1879 at the Academy, Royal Scottish Academy and elsewhere, and was elected R.I. in 1888 and R.O.I. in 1897, but never to the Academy. Some of his works were reproduced and he was among the better-known military painters, included by Spielmann in his Britannica article. His work was well composed and vigorous and followed the conventions of the genre, but it lacked the pathos of Lady Butler's or the excitement of Woodville's, and he never gained their reputation or popularity.

Another battle painter from a military background was Vereker Hamilton (1856-1931).<sup>11</sup> From an army family, son of a colonel and younger brother of Ian Hamilton, he was educated at Loretto and Wellington, studied painting at Dresden and Rome, tried coffee planting in Ceylon, then studied at the Slade under Legros, winning the landscape prize in 1886, and became a professional painter with a house in St. John's Wood. He painted landscape, portraits and, mostly in the '90s, large battle pieces, of the Napoleonic wars, the Mutiny and the campaigns in Afghanistan

and on the North-West Frontier. These included 'The attack on the Peiwar Kotal', 'The 92nd at Kandahar', 'The Ambuscade', and 'Piper Findlater at Dargai'. He was a devoted brother to Ian Hamilton and stayed with him in South Africa after Majuba, and in India. Roberts helped and encouraged him in his battle painting and used him to meet other artists: possibly partly to gain himself further publicity, supplementing his press contacts. He bought 'The attack on the Peiwar Kotal' and used it to illustrate his Forty-One Years in India. Vereker Hamilton was meticulous to ensure matériel accuracy. He questioned veterans and had unit records checked, learning the fallibility of memory. For example most informants told him the Gurkhas at the Peiwar Kotal wore khaki but one officer insisted they wore green, and the records confirmed him. For his 'Storming of the Kashmir Gate at Delhi' Hamilton visited the ruins, and also tried to discover the type of button worn by the British bugler. He painted a variety of genre and, unlike Lady Butler or Woodville, did not identify himself as a military painter. His style was quieter, less dramatic or strained, than theirs, and like them he followed the conventions of Victorian battle painting. His 'Attack on the Peiwar Kotal' was dramatic, with movement, and light shining on rifle barrels and bayonets. It showed Gurkha corpses and a wounded Gurkha, but little blood and no ugly wounds, horror or agony. His '92nd at Kandahar' showed the highlanders advancing in line towards smoke-wreathed fortifications, soldierly and heroic, with no dead or wounded. A landscapist, and knowing soldiers, he was aware of

terrain and it was often important in his battle pictures. His work was respected by contemporaries. He exhibited at the Academy and the Paris Salon, and was elected R.E. in 1887. Like Lady Butler's and Woodville's, his paintings were used in popular history books and encyclopedias. However in the early '90s his pictures, he wrote, "became unsaleable" and while he later sold 'An Ambuscade' to New South Wales, his '92nd at Kandahar', although it had been hung prominently "on the line" at the Academy, he failed to sell. This should not be taken as indicating a reaction against battle painting, but rather the discrimination of purchasers. His work was inferior to that of Lady Butler, Wollen or Woodville, and varied much in quality. The 'Ambuscade', a fine, evocative if implausible work, was sold. Even he later admitted that 'The 92nd' was "a shocking bit of work".<sup>12</sup> His battle pictures, compared to the best of the genre, lacked drama, were inadequately composed lacking a focal point and lacked individual human interest. Later he returned to landscapes, and painted more nudes and ballet dancers.

vi. C.E. FRIPP, G.D. GILES ET AL : NOTES

1. On Fripp largely from Who Was Who 1897-1916; Graves; Wood; Michael Barthorp, 'The Battle of Tofrek, 1885', J.S. Army Research LXIII (1985); material in N.A.M.
2. Harry V. Barnett, 'The Special Artist', MA ('83) 170.
3. AJ ('86) 251.
4. Barthorp 10.
5. On Hale largely from Who Was Who 1916-1928; Graves; Wood; N.A.M.
6. Emile-Auguste Carolus-Duran (1837-1917), successful French painter of portraits, history and genre.
7. On Giles largely from Who Was Who 1941-1950; Graves; Wood; N.A.M.
8. Illustration of uniforms is a subgenre of military art: the late 19th century leading artist was Richard Simkin (1851-1926), P.S. Walton, Simkin's Soldiers I (1981) 10.
9. AJ ('86) 251.
10. Who Was Who 1929-1940, 1480. On Wollen largely from ib; Graves; Wood; N.A.M.
11. On Hamilton partly from V.M. Hamilton, Things That Happened (1925); Ian Hamilton, Listening for the Drums (1944); I.B.M. Hamilton (V. Hamilton's son) The Happy Warrior (1966); Graves; N.A.M.
12. V. Hamilton 269.

4.     ARTISTS, DEFENCE AND THE PAUCITY OF BRITISH  
          BATTLE-PAINTING

Despite the rewards of successful battle painters and the popularity of battle paintings, there were few British battle painters, apparently because of dominant artistic values. Possibly indicative of national values, probably of values within an artistic subculture, the greatest Victorian painters chose not to paint battles.<sup>1</sup> Representative of dominant artists' values were those of Leighton, President of the Academy from 1878 to 1896.<sup>2</sup> He painted largely classical subjects, seeking to represent the ideal of beauty through scenes of ancient Greece. He believed that modern painting did not require modern subjects. Commissioned in 1868 to paint for the South Kensington Museum the fresco, 'The Arts of Industry as Applied to War', he chose not modern armaments - though the forging of great ordnance would have provided powerful images - but a quattrocento costume piece. He did not attempt battle painting but was not opposed to the genre and as P.R.A. agreed to its exhibition. He supported military preparation, was among the first members of the Artists' Rifles, rose through the ranks and was from 1869 to 1883 their commanding officer and largely responsible for establishing them as a leading Volunteer unit, and continued devoted to it. He was typical in that his art was distinct from his military values. He believed in national defence and that artists should serve it, but never saw his art as expressing his patriotic or military values. The world of art was for him, as for most of his contemporaries, a largely autonomous



subculture. Moreover, mundane factors of practicality and cost may have deterred some artists from battle painting. It was a relatively difficult genre demanding expenditure on models, uniforms and accoutrements, research for the required matériel accuracy, and the labour of painting the relatively large number of figures usual in battle scenes.<sup>3</sup> Possibly the standard of leading battle paintings deterred some artists.

Further evidence of artists' attitudes to war was their role in the auxiliary forces. In 1860 they formed the Artists' Rifles, which included Burne-Jones, Hunt, Leighton, Millais, Morris, Rossetti, Swinburne and Watts, with Ruskin an honorary member.<sup>4</sup> They were supported by the artistic establishment and their headquarters were initially at Burlington House. They became well-known, and under Leighton's command from 1869 to 1883 became a full battalion, "among the best of the Volunteer Corps of the Metropolis"<sup>5</sup> and part of the socially-exclusive 'Grey Brigade'.<sup>6</sup> In the Boer War the Artists contributed the largest contingent in the C.I.V., and individuals also served in the Imperial Yeomanry.<sup>7</sup> Their élite status was shown by their de facto officer-training function. In 1909 there were over two hundred former members holding commissions; and in France in November 1914 French, lacking officers, commissioned fifty-two Artists privates.<sup>8</sup> Though the proportion of artists decreased to a minority, the unit's artist connection continued.<sup>9</sup> Artists included G.W. Joy who served twenty-one years and C.E. Fripp who served thirteen. Its headquarters were at the Arts Club from 1868 to 1880, and from then to 1889 at the West London School of Art. When

H.A.R. May joined in 1882, being, "a bona-fide Artist...was (in theory at all events) supposed to be a necessary qualification".<sup>10</sup> Leighton continued, while P.R.A., a keen honorary colonel, and until 1903 the commanding officer was an artist. The art press continued to feature "the Artists" in articles such as 'The 'Artists' at Wimbledon Camp'.<sup>11</sup> The unit also acquired a collection of paintings, including battle paintings.<sup>12</sup> In 1914 artists again rallied to the unit and drilled at Burlington House.<sup>13</sup> Though less in numbers than in reputation, the artist connection continued important and indicative of the art establishment's attitude to military preparation and war. Moreover artists also served in other units. Villiers and E.M. Hale were officers in the Post Office Rifles, and Woodville in the Berkshire Yeomanry, Volunteer Royal Engineers and North Devon Hussars.<sup>14</sup> G.D. Giles, exceptional among battle painters in that he was an ex-regular, was a captain in the Suffolk Hussars. In the Boer War some artists served in the Imperial Yeomanry, among them Skeoch Cumming, a young watercolorist with "a penchant for military subjects".<sup>15</sup>

The attitudes of artists to war, and of the public to battle pictures, were further shown in the Boer War. The middle and upper classes - with some 'pro-Boer' exceptions - supported the war.<sup>16</sup> They volunteered; gave cash, artillery and machine guns to the C.I.V. and Imperial Yeomanry; and from "patriotic benevolence" gave to "the national patriotic funds".<sup>17</sup> These included those of the Lord Mayor of London, the Daily Telegraph, Scotsman and other newspapers, notably the Daily Mail

"Absent-Minded Beggar" Fund which raised a quarter of a million pounds.<sup>18</sup> The response of the artistic establishment was typical of their class, and some artists volunteered. During the Crimean War artists had donated works to be sold for service charities, and in 1900 the artistic establishment, through a committee including Alma-Tadema and Spielmann, organised the Artists' War Fund, to which artists gave works or money.<sup>19</sup> Queen Victoria, who gave "two etchings from her own hand", other royals, and "many, probably most, of our popular artists", including Alma-Tadema, Dicksee, Herkomer, Joy, Poynter, Prinsep, Riviere, Waterhouse and Watts contributed.<sup>20</sup> Alma-Tadema gave a painting of a girl with flowers, Riviere one of a fox terrier, and Watts a sketch of Dorothy Dene.<sup>21</sup> The 328 works were displayed at an exhibition, opened by Princess Louise, at the Guildhall. The works, which The Times claimed "would do credit to any exhibition", were then auctioned at Christie's, and £10,593 12s 0d given to five service charities.<sup>22</sup>

The Franco-Prussian War had inspired a revival of French military painting, and in 1900 the art critic A.C.R. Carter suggested that the Boer War might similarly, in Britain inspire, "a national school of battle painters... the time is now as ripe for British painters as it was for the French after 1870".<sup>23</sup> In fact, indicative of British artists' continuing attitudes to battle painting, it hardly affected "the world of Art". Artists supported the war, and there was public demand for war pictures as was shown by the sale of specials' sketches.<sup>24</sup> Yet almost no artists followed the Art Journal's suggestion that enter-

prising artists should go to the war and paint, "war subjects, for which there would assuredly be a great demand".<sup>25</sup> The art press commented on the war's minimal effect on the Academy exhibitions: M.H. Spielmann noted of the 1901 exhibition, "the Boer War has prompted a few canvases - fewer, perhaps, than might have been expected".<sup>26</sup> Established battle painters such as Woodville and Wollen painted Boer War scenes, as did Joy and a few minor artists.<sup>27</sup> Joy's 'Dreams on the Veldt', painted in 1900 portrayed wounded and dying British soldiers lying on the veld, and above them angels.<sup>28</sup> Of the war pictures, only a minority were of battle: the Art Journal commented in 1902 on those at the Academy, "no artist has attempted to depict a scene of actual carnage".<sup>29</sup> In choosing subjects most artists ignored the war.

All this indicated that the paucity of a British battle painting resulted not from artists' ideological opposition to military preparation and war - for they largely shared the values of the middle classes to which they belonged - but from their artistic preference, the subjects that attracted them as artists. It was widely assumed, partly from the success and wealth of leading artists - "the painters who wallow in gold"<sup>30</sup> - that artists were in harmony with the wishes of the public. The Magazine of Art stated in 1882, "Our painters and their public understand each other, and are in perfect sympathy. The artist paints to please".<sup>31</sup> In 1901 M.H. Spielmann claimed that the Academy exhibition, "reflects with accuracy the tendency of that art which appeals to the greatest number."<sup>32</sup>

Vereker Hamilton claimed that, "it was the absurdly high prices given by the rich middle-classes for the kind of pictures they liked that reduced so many of the painters, and made them give the public what they wanted".<sup>33</sup> However, while it was true that successful artists painted subjects the public favoured, it was also true that most artists chose not to paint a genre for which there was public demand - battle paintings. Some assumed that the British were uninterested in military art.<sup>34</sup> Woodville, for example, claimed in his memoirs that the public cared little for military pictures, that there were hardly any in public or private galleries, and that the army, "would rather hang the latest gaiety actress in their mess than the finest episode in their regimental history".<sup>35</sup> Yet in fact the public did favour battle paintings, as was shown by the success of the leading battle painters and the high prices paid for their works; by disproportionately many battle paintings being commercially reproduced, and the engravings selling so well.<sup>36</sup> Regiments and public galleries did acquire battle paintings. Leeds Art Gallery, for example, acquired Lady Butler's 'Scotland for Ever!' and E.M. Hale's 'The Drums of the Fore and Aft'. Lady Butler wrote in her memoirs that, "nearly all my principal works are either in the keeping of my Sovereign or in public galleries".<sup>37</sup> Public interest in battle painting apparently fluctuated with interest in war and defence, tending to increase with wars and threats of wars. It revived in the 1870s with the Franco-Prussian War and the perceived foreign threat, then with the Russo-Turkish War when, Woodville claimed, "the British public was taking one of its periodic fits

of interest in battle paintings and drawings".<sup>38</sup> Through these fluctuations, battle paintings continued popular, as contemporaries noted. In 1887 Walter Armstrong wrote, "Battle pictures are, at least, as popular with the English public as they are with any other. From my own observation I should say they are vastly more popular than with the public of France".<sup>39</sup> In 1906 Lady Butler exhibited her pastoral scene, 'A Cistercian Shepherd' which she highly regarded, but the public preferred her military paintings. As she wrote, "the public didn't want idylls from me at all. 'Give us soldiers and horses, but pastoral idylls - no!'"<sup>40</sup>

Popular taste and artistic production were interconnected, but with battle painting they diverged.<sup>41</sup> The evidence suggests that popular demand existed but that most artists within their artistic subculture and despite their positive attitudes to military preparation and war, chose from artistic preference not to paint battle paintings. That, while British artists and critics so praised the leading French battle painters, the leading British battle painters were less paid and less honoured than the leading painters of other genres, probably resulted not from subject matter but from their perceived relative inferiority as artists. That even Leighton in his last years had works unsold and that for some artists the late 19th century was "the lean years", suggests that the market may have been satiated for the artists' favoured subjects.<sup>42</sup> The public liked battle paintings of the type offered by the British battle painters, and that they did so was indicative of their attitudes to war, and also of the influences on them.

#### 4. ARTISTS, DEFENCE ETC: NOTES

1. There had been a few exceptions earlier e.g. Turner.
2. On Leighton largely from (Mrs.) A. Lang, Sir Frederick Leighton, P.R.A. (Art Annual, 1884); (Mrs.) Russell Barrington, The Life, Letters and Work of Frederick Leighton (1906); Gaunt, Olympus; Ormond.
3. On battle painters concern for accuracy Gilbert, 'Gibb', AJ ('97) 28; Meynell, Butler 101-3; obituary of Caton Woodville, Times 18 Aug 1927,12; I.B.M. Hamilton 84. Cf Ib 92-3.
4. On the Artists' Rifles largely from H.A.R. May, Memories of the Artists Rifles (1929); B.A. Young, The Artists and the S.A.S.(1960); Barrington; Gaunt, Olympus. For their Volunteer context v Hugh Cunningham, The Volunteer Force (1975). Other occupational groups also formed units e.g. barristers, civil servants, Post Office employees: cf the Pals' Battalions.
5. Barrington 12.
6. Young 20.
7. Ib 13-4.
8. R. Money Barnes, The Soldiers of London (1963)332; Young 20.
9. In 1893 artists 4.54, architects and architectural students 11.79; others included lawyers, doctors and engineers, May XXXIX.
10. May 18.
11. H.V. Barnett, 'The 'Artists' at Wimbledon Camp', MA ('83) 389-94.
12. These included Fripp's 'Isandhlwana' and Wollen's 'Abu Klea', both later given to N.A.M.
13. Butler, Autobiography 328; Meiron & Susie Harris, The War Artists (1983) 2.
14. Villiers, Personalities 42; Villiers 281; Woodville 251-64.
15. AJ (1900) 127.
16. On 'Pro-Boers' v Bernard Porter, Critics of Empire (1968)62-94; Stephen Koss, The Anatomy of an Antiwar Movement: The Pro-Boers(1973); J.W. Auld, 'The Liberal Pro-Boers', J.Br.Stud.(1975)78-101. On

middle class volunteering and pro-war demonstrations  
v Richard Price, An Imperial War and the British  
Working Class (1972) 146-53, 108-229; M.D. Blanch,  
'British Society and the War', (ed) Peter Warwick,  
The South African War (1980) 210-36.

17. An. Register 1899 234; Navy & Army Illustrated IX (1900)  
490, 586; (ed) H. Pease, The History of the Northum-  
berland (Hussars) Yeomanry 1819-1923 (1924) 25-7;  
Rayne Kruger, Good-bye Dolly Gray (1959) 151.
18. R. Kipling, Something of Myself (1937) 150; R. Pound &  
G. Harmsworth, Northcliffe (1959) 250. On the  
"A.M.B." Festival band concert, ILN CXVI (27 Jan  
1900) 116. The soap firm had its Vinolia War Fund.  
'Pro-Boers' had their own funds.
19. Frank Rinder, 'A War Fund Exhibition', AJ (1900) 92.  
G.F. Watts also declared his support for the war in  
'Our Race as Pioneers', Nineteenth C. XLIX (May 1901)  
849-57.
20. Times 22 Jan 1900, 4; AJ (1901) 96; Rinder 93; Joy 29.
21. Times ib. D. Dene was a well-known model and Leighton's  
protégée.
22. Rinder 92; AJ (1901) 157. A similar scheme operated in  
the Great War, Michael Lee, 'A Centenary of Military  
Painting'. Army Quarterly XCV (1967) 94; Harries 1.
23. AJ (1900) 251.
- 24,5. AJ (1900) 159.
26. M.H. Spielmann, 'Preface', R.A. Pictures 1901 ii; Frank  
Rinder, 'The Royal Academy Exhibition of 1902',  
AJ (1902) 206.
27. AJ, MA, R.A. Pictures 1899-1902.
28. Joy 51.
29. Rinder 206.
30. Henry James quo Ormond 81.
31. MA ('82) 257; cf Gaunt, Olympus 160.
32. M.H. Spielmann, R.A. Pictures 1901 i.



33. V. Hamilton 169.
34. AJ (1900) 251.
35. Woodville 79.
36. R.A. Pictures passim; Meynell, Butler 10. On the popularity of battle paintings in the '60s see AJ ('64) 42.
37. Butler, Autobiography 185.
38. Lalumia 43-6; Woodville 13. Cf the fluctuations in military commemorative ware Arch loc. cit.
39. Armstrong 187.
40. Butler 306.
41. My argument, though supported by available evidence, is not conclusive. Within the period there were apparently fluctuations in the popularity with artists of battle painting, Armstrong 176; AJ (1902) 142; Woodville 12.
42. Ormond 119; AJ ('89) 185.

## 5. IMAGES OF WAR

"C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre"

The Magazine of Art, 1897<sup>1</sup>

Battle painters selected certain subjects and portrayed them in a certain way. They portrayed achievement in war - if sometimes the achievement of military virtues in defeat - rather than the "friction" which Clausewitz claimed, "distinguishes real war from war on paper".<sup>2</sup> Repeatedly they chose to paint certain favourite famous and dramatic conflicts: Waterloo, the charge of the Light Brigade, Rorke's Drift, Tel-el-Kebir, saving the guns at Maiwand, Dargai, and the 21st Lancers at Omdurman.<sup>3</sup> Balaclava was painted by Barker, Lady Butler and Woodville; Rorke's Drift by Lady Butler and de Neuville; Tel-el-Kebir by Lady Butler, Villiers and Woodville; Maiwand by Beadle, Giles and Woodville; Dargai by Gibb, Hale, Hamilton and Woodville; and the 21st Lancers by Rowlandson, Wollen and Woodville. The portrayal of battle, and responses to it, both resulted from and influenced attitudes to war. Victorians including artists, critics and the public, had certain assumptions on the nature of war and its portrayal. These were usually implicit, suggested or mentioned in passing rather than deliberately articulated. War was widely perceived as largely evil, destructive, horrible and inflicting great suffering, but nevertheless accepted as sometimes necessary. Within war, resulting from and in contrast to its negative aspects, were the noble and redeeming qualities it engendered: patriotism, duty, honour, loyalty,

endurance, courage, adventure, self-sacrifice and the noble death, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" - ancient warrior virtues became Victorian clichés. Victorians varied in their emphases on the negative and positive aspects. The more extreme militarists and social darwinists in Britain, as in Germany and France, emphasised and glorified the positive aspects almost to the exclusion of the negative.<sup>4</sup> Wolseley, obsessed with British decadence, believed that only a great war could regenerate and ennoble the British: "War purifies a degraded Nation".<sup>5</sup> The social darwinist Karl Pearson claimed that when wars ceased, "mankind will no longer progress" and that a nation was, "kept up to a high pitch of external efficiency by contest, chiefly by way of war with inferior races".<sup>6</sup> Professor Cramb, London University and drawing-room history lecturer, imperialist and later one of Robert's writers in the compulsory service campaign, wrote in 1900 of the British dead in the Boer War,

"Fallen in this cause, in battle for this ideal,  
behold them advance to greet the great dead who  
fell in the old wars! See, through the mists  
of time, Valhalla, its towers and battlements,  
uplift themselves, and from their places these  
phantoms of mighty heroes of all ages rise to  
greet these English youths who enter smiling,  
blood yet trickling from their wounds".<sup>7</sup>

He defined war as, "a phase in the life-effort of the State towards completer self-realisation...Destruction is not its aim, but the intensification of life...War is thus a manifestation of the world-spirit in the form most sublime and awful that can enthrall the contemplation of man".<sup>8</sup> In

1905 the Spectator praised Ian Hamilton for "revelling, as some old pagan hero would revel, in the grand game of war" and for protesting against "the common theory that war is horrible".<sup>9</sup> Others were more ambivalent and more concerned with suffering and destruction, but still emphasised war's positive attributes. The pictorial representation of war was perceived and evaluated through these attitudes to war. War was seen as a subject that should be reported, and as a fitting subject of fine art, art that was inherently superior to mere photographic copying. War portrayal was seen as descriptive, as historical record, and as inspirational. It was deliberately selective, emphasising the noble qualities and omitting the repulsive aspects. Victorian battle painting followed self-censoring conventions: no ugliness or squalor; minimised, conventionalised wounds; few British dying or dead; and no cruelty, horror or agony.<sup>10</sup>

Meissonier declared that, "the man who has seen war is the man to paint war",<sup>11</sup> and he and other continental painters had battle experience. In Britain battle experience though valued was not, even by soldiers and others with such experience, believed necessary for battle painters. Some had such experience as special war artists: Fripp, Giles and Hale. However the most highly-regarded battle-painters - Lady Butler, Woodville and Gibb - had no battle experience, and Lady Butler claimed that if she had witnessed battle she could not have painted it.<sup>12</sup> There was little discernible difference between the works of those with and without battle experience. Both portrayed battle as colourful, dramatic and heroic, and followed the same conventions of omission. Yet even when the battle-

experienced were, like Hale, inferior painters to the unbattled, their work had an authenticity the unbattled could never quite attain. The battle-experienced tended more to show the milling confusion of battle, and had greater awareness of terrain and its significance: its harshness, scale and dwarfing of the combatants. In the paintings of Lady Butler, Woodville and Gibb terrain was mere background to dominant men. In the works of the battle-experienced - as for the troops - sand, rock, hills and distance were crucial. Hamilton lacked battle experience yet his portrayal of terrain resembled that of the battle-experienced, for he had lived with soldiers and been advised in his battle-painting by Roberts: for example, in his 'Attack on the Peiwar Kotal' the trees and the steep slope were crucial.<sup>13</sup>

In battle painting quasi-photographic exactitude was not expected, but matériel accuracy was required, and leading British painters researched assiduously to achieve it. In 1875 the Art Journal criticised Philippoteaux for portraying 1815 highlanders in 1870s uniforms.<sup>14</sup> Battle painting should appear realistic: in 1888 the Journal criticised a Crofts picture as, "so clean and neat, that the battle seems conducted in a toy shop".<sup>15</sup> The artist was supposed to create, from his imagination as an artist, a scene true to the spirit and moral quality of the battle, and superior to the "mere mechanical reflection of a photograph or mirror".<sup>16</sup> Detailed information, right attitudes, hard work and above all inspiration and imagination, could create. Lady Butler, for example, believed in her creative "vision" and contemporaries praised her

"creative imagination" and her "dramatic imagination almost Shakespearian".<sup>17</sup> Victorian art told stories, sometimes trivial anecdotes but in the most respected paintings, moral tales. Paintings conveyed meaning visually, by images different from words, and by visual metaphors. Nevertheless artists sometimes, particularly when exhibiting historical and battle paintings, provided explanatory text, making verbally explicit their intended meaning.<sup>18</sup> This usually stated the artist's message of patriotism, imperialism and military virtues: those stated in literature by, for example, Newbolt and Kipling. Fripp exhibited 'The last stand at Isandhula' with the text, "The brave defenders stood their ground until the last round of ammunition was spent. The death role of the Zulus showed how gallantly the 24th had fought". Giles' text to 'The battle of Tamai' included, "Our troops met the onslaught with the utmost steadiness". Lady Butler claimed, "I never painted for the glory of war, but to portray its pathos and heroism",<sup>19</sup> and in the texts to her paintings emphasised heroism: that to 'Steady the Drums and Fifes' stated, "to stand under fire, still and motionless, is a supreme act of will". The chromolithograph of Woodville's 'All That Was Left of Them' was published with,

"The odds were one hundred and fifty of our  
Lancers to four hundred of the enemy - the  
position was untenable; but answering their  
young officers' shout of 'No surrender',  
the 'Death or Glory Boys' upheld that  
famous motto of their regiment by fighting  
till they fell by explosive bullets at

twenty, ten and five yards. Such deeds  
may not win battles, but such courage  
makes our nation".

Such pictures and text were not always entirely accurate,<sup>20</sup>  
but they were usually accepted, and praised.

Battle portrayal was selective and a comparison  
between what was shown in paintings and the reality, insofar  
as known, indicates the nature of the selection and the  
desiderata of battle painters and public.<sup>21</sup> One example was  
the battle of Maiwand in 1880, a disaster in which the 66th  
suffered appalling losses and some of them panicked and fled,  
and of which Roberts wrote, "our troops were completely  
routed".<sup>22</sup> Caton Woodville, J.P. Beadle and G.D. Giles all  
chose to paint similar portrayals of the battle: not defeat,  
casualties, mutilation and suffering but 'Saving the Guns',  
with galloping horse artillery, heroism and excitement.  
Possibly, as with the emphasis on the Rorke's Drift  
heroism following Isandhlwana there may here have been  
some attempt, maybe subconscious, to distract from and com-  
pensate for the disaster: not to warn but to reassure.  
Another notable example was the charge of the 21st Lancers  
at Omdurman; because it caught the public imagination,  
became famous and a favourite subject of battle painting,  
and because it was well documented and has since been  
evaluated by military historians.<sup>23</sup> The charge was a  
blunder following inadequate reconnaissance. It nulli-  
fied the Lancers' advantages over the Ansar, was milita-  
rily unnecessary, contributed nothing to the defeat of the  
enemy, and resulted in a large proportion of the British

casualties at Omdurman, and reduced the British capability to follow up their victory. Kitchener, needing cavalry for the pursuit, was angry.<sup>24</sup> In his original dispatch he only briefly mentioned the charge, without praise but emphasising their casualties: "the 21st Lancers lost heavily".<sup>25</sup> However correspondents and editors immediately praised the charge as heroic. The Times for example called it: "the brilliant charge of the 21st Lancers" and "a fine piece of dashing cavalry work worthy of the best traditions of our mounted arm".<sup>26</sup> Reuter's report called it, "the famous charge of the 21st Lancers against enormous odds...This maiden charge of the 21st Lancers is regarded as an extremely brilliant affair".<sup>27</sup> The Illustrated London News, having already featured the 21st, the only British cavalry in the Sudan army, in two full-page drawings by Woodville, praised their "memorable charge" and published as a special supplement a photogravure of Woodville's work, "an important picture representing the gallant charge of the 21st Lancers".<sup>28</sup> The Annual Register reinforced this view, praising the "conspicuous daring of the charge...the most magnificent incident of the battle...a gallantry that has rarely, if ever, been surpassed, and their splendid exploit was marked by acts of personal devotion which enhanced still further the glory that they won".<sup>29</sup> Though favourable, the press reports also emphasised the casualties and mutilations. Reuters reported, "They struggled through, but every man who fell was immediately hacked to pieces by the swords of the Dervishes. The British cavalrymen rallied, bleeding and blown...the lancers having accomplished their object, though at the cost of heavy



casualties".<sup>30</sup> The Daily Telegraph correspondent reported, "The severity of the action may be judged by...the total loss which the 21st Lancers have sustained".<sup>31</sup> The Illustrated London News also emphasised the casualties: the 21st Lancers "have bought their glory dearly...Every man who fell in that desperate encounter was hacked to pieces by the swords of the fanatics".<sup>32</sup> Moreover the negative aspects were reported in two widely-read "instant histories" by correspondents, those of Churchill and Steevens. Churchill reported that, "In 120 seconds five officers, 65 men and 119 horses out of fewer than 400 had been killed or wounded" and described the wounded, "all covered with blood and many displaying most terrible injuries - faces cut to rags, bowels protruding, fishhook spears stuck in their bodies - realistic pictures from the darker side of war".<sup>33</sup> However, as an enthusiastic young cavalry subaltern who wanted another charge "'pour la gloire' - and to buck up British cavalry",<sup>34</sup> Churchill claimed that, "there can be little doubt that the moral effect of the charge had been very great, and that these brave enemies were no longer unshaken".<sup>35</sup> Steevens was more critical: he called the charge "indisputable folly" and "a gross blunder".<sup>36</sup> The charge was both a costly blunder and heroic: the press, public and authorities chose to emphasise the heroism.<sup>37</sup> They did so probably not only because of the attraction of the heroism and because of popular imperialism: Baring noted "the rapid growth of the Imperialist spirit, which about this time took place in England" and the Annual Register reported of 1898, "Hardly within living memory has England passed through a period in which the national consciousness has been so deeply

stirred by imperial issues."<sup>38</sup> The attitudes to the charge were also probably partly in response to the late 19th century anxieties and perceptions of foreign threats. The Sudan campaign was perceived partly in this wider context: a repeated theme, for example, in Steevens' writings.<sup>39</sup>

Steevens stated that, "The blunders of British cavalry are the fertile seed of British glory" and that, "The populace has glorified the charge of the 21st".<sup>40</sup> The battle painters continued that glorification. Though knowing the facts from the published reports, none showed it was a blunder, nor the extent and nature of the British casualties. They portrayed it as colourful, dramatic and without horror or agony. Woodville's painting, a dashing, close-packed mêlée of men and horses, showed more lancers than dervishes, lancers and swords waving in the air and a single, unbloodied British casualty.<sup>41</sup> The focus of attention was the clash between a British officer on a white charger and a helmeted emir on a black charger. Similarly E.M. Hale's painting showed no horror, and few British casualties, dying conventionally without agony. G.D. Rowlandson showed only two British casualties, without blood or agony. All, however, showed movement, excitement and drama.

Another example of selective battle portrayal was Magersfontein. This was a disaster for the Highland Brigade, which was "led into a butcher's shop and bloody well left there", suffering 750 casualties.<sup>42</sup> Conan Doyle wrote, "Never has Scotland had a more grievous

day...it may be doubted if any single battle has ever put so many families of high and low into mourning".<sup>43</sup> Woodville portrayed neither the dying nor the fleeing, but "'All That Was Left of Them" the Highland Brigade re-forming after the battle of Magersfontein': dramatically grouped highlanders lining up, defiant, determined and, in morale, undefeated; the few wounded with no visible wounds or blood and no agony, a single figure lying, his face averted, possibly dead, and in the background, shadowy and indistinct, prone figures that might be wounded or dead.<sup>44</sup> As the Magazine of Art stated of battle paintings, "the more ghastly aspect of the incidents of war are carefully suppressed".<sup>45</sup>

Contemporary comment on war portrayal emphasised the "heart-stirring, dramatic, heroic and inspirational, "the inspiring theme".<sup>46</sup> It was evaluated largely for its expression of patriotic warrior qualities: it should "conjure up the scenes of heroism and sacrifice" and show "heroic deeds...glory and pathos".<sup>47</sup> Typical of contemporary comment was the critic A.C.R. Carter's The Work of War Artists in South Africa (1900) which praised Woodville's 'In the Trenches at Ladysmith', a typical work of Woodvillian implausibility in which British infantry stood bunched close together and prominent above their trench, apparently oblivious of the need to take cover from Boer rifle fire.<sup>48</sup> He wrote that "in this thin line of determined defenders Mr. Woodville sets down all that stolidity, eagerness, coolness, and self-sacrifice incarnated in Tommy Atkins. Each face here is national: it is the face

of a British hero".<sup>49</sup> He praised the war artists in the Boer War for making their theme that, "So long as war exists, the acme of human suffering must be endured, and fortunately it can still remain our proud boast that no man is readier to meet it in heroic silence, and in unflinching fortitude than the Briton".<sup>50</sup> He quoted and agreed with the Comte Delaborde's oration on Meissonier: "Let there be no dwelling on the stern lessons of a terrible disenchantment, but a noble encouragement in patriotic devotion, in well-doing, in faith and in hope".<sup>51</sup> Battle was believed a subject worthy of painting, "of the highest value in too commercial days".<sup>52</sup> Alice Meynell argued battle painting should be anecdotal and concerned with individuals since, "War seen from a distance...is stupid; it is noble in detail only",<sup>53</sup> and another critic claimed that its chief necessity was "individual character".<sup>54</sup> Mawkish sentimentality, theatricality, melodrama and viciousness were deprecated. M.H. Spielmann in 1901 praised the British paintings of the Boer War at the Academy: "in none of them will you find that unwholesome yearning after the morbid or the cheap effort at illegitimate 'sensation' which contaminate so many of the Salons in foreign countries".<sup>55</sup> Truth was believed essential; Lady Butler was praised for, "a scrupulous, quiet and close fidelity to the very smallest accidents of individual character and peculiarity, a truthfulness which is its own apology and its own strength".<sup>56</sup> Successful battle portrayal was perceived as realistic, but a realism limited by decorum, by deliberate omission.<sup>57</sup> Robert Gibb's 'The Thin Red Line' was praised for its "reticence in the ghastly parts of the

picture."<sup>58</sup> Alice Meynell claimed that, "art must exercise a certain reticence; the whole truth cannot be told, as every one knows who has had a glimpse of a battle-field in the absolute sincerity of the photograph".<sup>59</sup> Lady Butler wrote that the battle painter should, "keep himself at a distance, lest the ignoble and vile details under his eyes should blind him irretrievably to the noble things that rise beyond".<sup>60</sup> Carter praised Meissonier for avoiding the gruesome side of war: "The depicting of such horrors has been left to such a zealous realist as Verestchagin, and to such an uncompromising recorder as the camera".<sup>61</sup> He praised British war artists for avoiding sensationalism and "declining to make cheap capital out of seething realism".<sup>62</sup> He claimed that, "Art has no home among the horrors of realism or of carnage. The warrior asks for no reminder of these. He hopes that they may be buried deep beneath the paths of peace".<sup>63</sup> He denied that "preachings on canvas"<sup>64</sup> against war would ever succeed. This decorous selection and omission was the norm in pre-1914 portrayal of war, in the illustrated press as at the Royal Academy. Yet while its practitioners saw it as proper and beneficial, to their pacifist critics it was deliberate lying, the hiding of the real horror of war. While battle painting was accepted by the art establishment and popular with the public, a minority of critics condemned it, asserting that its subject and necessity of omission invalidated it as true art: "battle painting in England can never be realistic, never even wholly sincere. The subject is to be set down among those which are "unpaintable", or, at least, which are to be treated with

a reticence and selected with a fastidiousness that tie the artist's hands and rob him of the freedom necessary for successful accomplishment of the task".<sup>65</sup> Among the condemners of conventional battle painters was Helen Zimmern, who in 1885 claimed,

"They have depicted pretty uniforms, a monarch or general on a prancing steed, waving banners, a theatrical skirmish and puffs of kindly shielding smoke wherever scenes of butchery would otherwise be seen; official pictures, in short, where victory is displayed but never defeat, a species of art that lived by war and which was calculated to immortalise it".<sup>66</sup>

In 1897 W.M. Gilbert wrote that, "when military pictures are spoken of our thoughts invariably turn to France".<sup>67</sup> France dominated 19th and early 20th century art and since French military painting was most prestigious, much British discussion of the genre was of French rather than British battle painting. The genre's protagonists among British painters and critics repeatedly praised French battle painting as the world's best. Alice Meynell, writing in 1882 of the effect of Franco-Prussian war, claimed,

"The French, who had the failure of war to treat, far from shrinking from its presentment in Art, developed their school of military painting in a manner which might almost indemnify them for their defeat. The triumph and caracolling and the glory of Horace Vernet were indeed past and gone,

but the pathos of loss produced the newer  
and far more realistic French Art which  
is emphatically the Art of our day, and  
which has set an example to the world".<sup>68</sup>

Lady Butler and other painters and critics greatly admired de Neuville.<sup>69</sup> Alice Meynell claimed he was "the leader of modern military art", and Wilfrid Meynell claimed that, "'All the glories of France', flaunting in the halls of Versailles, are not so glorious as a group of De Neuville's soldiers keeping one another warm under a bank of snow".<sup>70</sup> Villiers claimed that de Neuville and Vereshchagin were the greatest painters of war pictures, and Woodville claimed that de Neuville, Detaille and Meissonier were the leading French military painters and that, "their pictures have never been equalled anywhere else".<sup>71</sup> Claude Philips, however, considered Raffet, "one of the greatest of modern Frenchmen...the inventor of modern military art".<sup>72</sup> The art press repeatedly praised French military painters; for example the Art Journal in 1888 claimed that, "The palm must certainly be given to M. Detaille...He still exhibits that marvellous precision of detail and that knowledge of soldier-life which makes him the first of French battle painters".<sup>73</sup> Their admirers and patrons included Ruskin, Lord Hertford and the Queen; in 1881 she commissioned de Neuville to paint the capture of Cetewayo.<sup>74</sup> Meissonier was made an honorary Royal Academician. While British protagonists of the genre praised French battle painting, British opponents of the genre castigated French works as bloodthirsty, sensationalist and deliberately startling by loathsome gory horror and carnage.<sup>75</sup> The Magazine of Art,

for example, in 1897 claimed, "It is a military nation, is France, and a people passionately devoted to 'sensation'; and when these two main characteristics find common ground...in the art or literature of the day, they resolve themselves into an expression of the heroic, the startling or the horrible".<sup>76</sup> Pacifists in Britain and on the continent condemned conventional battle painting as deliberate lying, hiding the reality of war. However, the pacifists were a small minority. Before 1914 the battle painters, not their critics, still expressed the dominant view. The Great War finally changed public attitudes; as Lady Butler wrote in October 1914, "Who will look at my 'Waterloos' now?"<sup>77</sup>

While within the "world of art" and art critics attitudes fluctuated, pictures of battle - by special war artists and by home-based battle painters - continued popular and influential with the wider public. They were extensively disseminated through a variety of media including periodicals, prints, postcards, advertisement, encyclopedias, popular histories and textbooks. They complemented and reinforced the writings of the war correspondents, and contributed to increased popular imperialism and support for imperial wars and to the increased popularity of the army. They greatly influenced the perception of war of the public and of soldiers who themselves had not yet experienced battle. They influenced men towards joining the army and contributed to the response in 1914 and 1915. As Richard Holmes has written, "The arts, in their broadest sense, play a more important role in creating images of war than is generally recognised".<sup>78</sup>



Often those affected were unaware of the influence: their image of war was an unquestioned assumption. One who realised the influence of battle pictures on his own life was Slim. As a boy in the 1890s, the son of a provincial commercial lower middle class family without military connections, he looked at the pictures in the Cassells' part-work British Battles on Land and Sea and, as he wrote in his memoirs, they began his interest in soldiering,

"Almost every battle, from Saxons and Normans lambasting one another with great axes at Hastings to Wolseley-helmeted British soldiers firing steady volleys into charging Fuzzy-Wuzzies in the Sudan, was there. I pored over these pictures and through them I first began to daydream of myself as a soldier."<sup>79</sup>

Many others of his generation, similarly influenced, did not survive to write their memoirs.

5. IMAGES OF WAR: NOTES

1. Anon, 'The Exhibition at the Royal Academy' MA ('97)156; criticising Woodville's and Wollen's paintings of charges.
2. Michael Howard, Clausewitz (1983)26. A.S. Byatt has suggested that war in literature may be seen as a debate between the traditional military ideology and 'friction', with writers usually describing the challenge of friction, 'Viewpoint: The resistant element' in 'Literature and War - a Symposium' T.L.S. (17 May 1985) 548.
3. Similarly military commemorative ware concentrated on certain campaigns and persons, ignoring others. Dargai caught the public imagination: it was the subject of Newbolt's 'The Gay Gordons', and Piper Findlater, VC, later played the music halls.
4. On militarism v Brian Bond, War and Society in Europe, 1870-1970 (1984) passim. W.M. Gilbert suggested that lack of militarism in Britain was one reason for the fewness of battle painters, W.M. Gilbert, 'Robert Gibb, R.S.A.', AJ ('97) 25.
5. Journal 11 March, 1 April 1885, (ed) Preston 165, 183. For Amery on war as the supreme test, and its benefits, (ed) L.S. Amery, The Times History of the War in South Africa I (1900) 11-12.
6. Karl Pearson, National Life From the Standpoint of Science (1905) 26-7,46, quoted Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform (1910) 41.
7. J.A. Cramb, Reflections on the Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain (1900)35; cf 'Drummer Hodge'. John Adam Cramb (1862-1913) was Professor of Modern History at Queen's College, London, and "an occasional lecturer on military history at the Staff College, Camberley, and at York, Chatham, and other centres".
8. Ib 174.
9. Spectator 30 Dec.1905,1124, unsigned but presumably by Strachey.
10. On the unreality of pre-1914 battle-painting v Holmes, Firing Line 61-4. Battle pictures have been categorised as 'analytical', 'narrative', 'ornamental' and 'glorifying', John Keegan & Joseph Darracott,

The Nature of War (1981)106: orthodox Victorian battle painting was 'glorifying' while the war specials' sketches were also 'analytical' and 'narrative'.

11. Carter 2.
12. Times 4 Oct.1933,17.
13. I.B.M. Hamilton 85. The painting, formerly owned by Roberts, is now owned by N.A.M.
14. AJ ('75) 220.
15. AJ ('88) 219. Cf Kipling, The Light that Failed (1891, 1907) 49.
16. MA ('79-80) 279.
17. Butler 261; Meynell, Butler 22; Saturday Review quo ib 4.
18. Printed in the exhibition catalogue, reprinted in Algernon Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors (1906).
19. Times 4 Oct.1933, 17.
20. 'All That Was Left of Them' was inaccurate: the lancers fought well but finally some surrendered, H.W. Wilson, After Pretoria: the Guerilla War (1902) 743-8; Byron Farwell, The Great Boer War (1976) 341-2. The incident was unusually well documented as, in addition to the British accounts, Smuts and Reitz fought there and described it.
21. On the reality of battle v John Keegan, The Face of Battle (1976), John Ellis, The Sharp End of War (1980) and Richard Holmes, Firing Line (1985).
22. Holmes 224; F. Roberts, Forty-One Years in India (1897, 1900) 470.
23. My account of the charge and responses to it is partly from G.W. Steevens, With Kitchener to Khartum (1898); Winston S. Churchill, The River War (1899, 1960); My Early Life (1930,1959); Randolph S. Churchill, Winston S. Churchill Vol.I Youth (1966); Marquis of Anglesey, A History of the British Cavalry, Vol.3,1872-1898 (1982).
24. Anglesey 385.

25. Times 5 Sept 1898,2.
26. Ib 5 Sept,5; 6 Sept,4.
27. Ib 6 Sept,3. With one correspondent killed and one wounded, The Times had to use reports from agency and other paper's correspondents.
28. ILN CXIII, 3 Sept,346-7; 1 Oct,481; 24 Sept,438.
29. Annual Register 1898 155, 346.
30. Times 6 Sept. 3.
31. Ib 9 Sept, 3.
32. ILN CXIII (10 Sept 1898) 367.
33. W.S. Churchill, River War 282.
34. Letter to Ian Hamilton (16 Sept 1898) quo R.S. Churchill 419.
35. W.S. Churchill, River War 278. Churchill's attitude to the charge later changed: he wrote in My Early Life (1930), "There one could see the futility of the much vaunted Arme Blanche". It was not what he saw in 1898.
36. Steevens 293.
37. Steevens suggested that press and public pressure led to the authorities' response, 292-3. Three V.C.s were awarded and Lt-Col. Martin, who ordered the charge, was awarded the C.B. The regiment was awarded the title, 'Empress of India's' and Britains manufactured models of them in foreign service order.
38. Cromer, Modern Egypt II 83; AR 147.
39. e.g. Steevens 274,322-3.
40. Steevens 273,292-3.
41. Now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; reproduced in Robert Wilkinson-Latham, The Sudan Campaigns 1881-1898 (1976) 34.
42. A Black Watch soldier, quo Byron Farwell, The Great Boer War (1977)112. See also Thomas Packenham,

The Boer War (1979) 200-6.

43. A. Conan Doyle, The Great Boer War (1901) 161.
44. ILN CXVI (20 Jan 1900) 102.
45. MA ('97) 156.
46. A.C.R. Carter, The Work of War Artists in South Africa  
(Art Annual, 1900) 6.
47. Ib 1, 12.
48. Ib 23, reprinted from ILN.
49. Ib 24.
50. Ib 32.
51. Ib 30.
52. Wilfrid Meynell, 'George Dunlop Leslie, R.A.' MA  
( '79-80) 232.
53. Alice Meynell, 'Alphonse de Neuville', MA ('81) 354.  
W. Meynell repeated this argument in Butler 31.
54. MA ('81) 305.
55. M.H. Spielmann, R.A. Pictures 1901 ii.
56. MA ('79-80) 278.
57. The causes of such omission are largely conjectural;  
partly from ignorance, decorum and prudery, belief  
in the moral purpose of art, public opinion (as  
suggested in MA ('97) 156), favourable view of war  
and defence; partly from what John Keegan has  
called, "a civilised distaste...for what might  
shock or disgust...an unwillingness to give scandal  
to the innocent", Keegan 18. Some of his comment  
in The Face of Battle on the written presentation  
of battle is applicable to the visual, with the  
conventional battle painting comparable to the  
traditional written "battle piece".
58. George R. Halkett, 'The Scottish Royal Academy  
Exhibition', MA ('81) 263.
59. A. Meynell 356. Her "absolute sincerity to the  
photograph" was exaggerated. They could be faked,

as in the American Civil War or deceive by omission as did Fenton's. Photographs of British dead were unusual and had much impact: those of Spion Kop were not initially published in Britain. Examples of reportorial faking are displayed at the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford.

60. Butler 47.
61. Carter 4.
62. Ib 32.
- 63,4. Ib 30.
65. MA ('97) 156. The art press indicates a reaction against battle painting in the 90s, but apparently confined to professional critics and some artists: in 1902 the Art Journal commented that battle painting was less popular with artists than formerly. Public opinion was probably more militaristic, and continued to favour battle paintings. However an apparent shift in opinion may be only a different editor: possibly so with the Magazine of Art as Spielmann replaced Henley in 1886.
66. H. Zimmern, 'An Eastern Painter', AJ ('85) 39.
67. W.M. Gilbert, 'Robert Gibb, R.S.A.', AJ ('97) 25.
68. A. Meynell, 'A German Military Painter', AJ ('87) 5.
69. Butler 27, 138.
70. A. Meynell, 'Alphonse de Neuville', MA ('81) 354;  
W. Meynell, Butler 31.
71. Villiers, Personalities 24; Woodville 9; cf MA ('98) 666.
72. Claude Philips, 'The Wallace Collection: The French Pictures', AJ (1902) 136. Auguste Raffet (1804-60) painted Napoleonic and Algerian battle scenes.
73. AJ ('88) 190. For Wolseley's admiration of Detaille, Wolseley, Letters 284.
74. MA ('81) iv.
75. M.H. Spielmann, 'The Paris Salons', MA ('97-8) 495. The criticism of French battle painting was part of the wider attack on the values of Salon paintings. See above p47.

76. MA ('97) 185-6.
77. Diary 22 October 1914, Butler 327. She was right in the longer term, but not as soon as she expected. Though the Great War, largely through the official war artists, produced new war art and though it caused a reaction against the values of prewar military painting, traditional 'academic' battle painting by the established battle painters - including Lady Butler, Wollen and Woodville - and by other home-based artists continued, without help from the official war artist schemes, throughout the war and into the 1920s. During the war there was revived interest in traditional military painting, with the 1915 Guildhall exhibition of naval and military works. Traditional battle painting has never ended but, ignored by the art establishment, continues for regiments and collectors.
78. R. Holmes, Firing Line 59: on the influence of art, literature and film on soldiers, ib 59-69.
79. Quo Ronald Lewin, Slim: The Standardbearer (1976, '78) 2. Some responded differently: Victor Gollancz claimed his hatred of war originated in childhood revulsion from a Victorian history-book picture of the battle of Balaclava.

## 6. ALTERNATIVE PORTRAYAL: VERESHCHAGIN

The 19th century world of art was international.<sup>1</sup> Leading British artists exhibited and sold on the Continent, and were honoured by continental academies. The work of leading Continental, especially French, painters, including battle painters, was familiar to British artists, critics and art-buyers. It was featured in the British art press and sometimes exhibited in England. British response to continental war paintings indicated British attitudes to the genre, and the British preferred image of war. One important example was the response to the leading Russian war painter, Vassili Vereshchagin (1842-1904)<sup>2</sup> whose work became internationally known through one-man exhibitions in western Europe, Britain and the United States, extensive self-advertisement, press coverage, publicity and controversy. He maintained more contact with western Europe and gained a wider international reputation than any other Russian painter.<sup>3</sup> He was a nobleman, naval-cadet trained, who studied painting in St. Peterburg and Paris. He served with the Russian army in Central Asia and was decorated for bravery. His experience of war inspired pictures including 'The Apotheosis of War', a pyramid of skulls, and 'Left Behind', a dying soldier deserted by his fellows, while crows and vultures gathered. He served in the Russo-Turkish War and was wounded, then painted more war scenes, exhibiting in the 'eighties in Paris, London, Berlin, Dresden, Vienna and New York.

In 1887 he published an English translation of his



Autobiographical Sketches which included his memoirs of the Russo-Turkish War. He had a "great desire" for further war experience and, "resolved to seize every opportunity that should occur of going to the front", wanting to learn, "the meaning of war".<sup>4</sup> With apparently boyish enthusiasm he boasted of his military achievement, danger and courage under fire. He praised Skobelev and his warrior heroism. Describing his campaigning, in clichés he expressed uncritical enthusiasm for war and only briefly mentioned, without condemning, its horror, suffering and destruction. He accepted military values and included no propaganda against war. However, describing his painting after the war, he then emphasised his depiction of war's horror "- impressions of battles, wounds, disease and all sorts of misery, the inevitable attendants of every war. The result was that people would not believe me; they said that I lied: that my pictures were the work of my imagination".<sup>5</sup> He also painted historical pictures of Bonaparte's invasion of Russia, which were popular and much reproduced. Some Russian artists, notably the Peredvizhniki (Wanderers) were then attempting "purpose painting", for social change.<sup>6</sup> Unlike these, Verestchagin kept apart from active politics. Nevertheless his art was, he claimed, purposive. Influenced by Tolstoy, and self-proclaimed "apôtre de la paix", he lectured, wrote pamphlets and painted against war.<sup>7</sup> He asserted that he promoted peace by showing in his paintings the reality and horror of war. In 1900 he tried unsuccessfully to gain the Nobel peace prize. Despite his "apostat antiguerrier" he continued fascinated by war, drawn to successive campaigns: the Sino-Japanese War, the

Philippines, and the Russo-Japanese War, in which he died when the Russian flagship sank. Fast and prolific, he painted with a startling harshly-coloured quasi-photographic realism that has been accused of sadism. He wrote in 1888,

"These subjects I have treated in a fashion far from sentimental, for having myself killed many a poor fellow-creature in different wars, I have not the right to be sentimental...My intention was to examine war in its different aspects, and transmit these faithfully. Facts laid upon canvas without embellishment must speak for themselves".<sup>8</sup>

His work was exceptional and controversial. Though Alexander II and Russian galleries owned paintings by him, the tsarist authorities, at military request, suppressed his 'Apotheosis' and 'Left Behind' and he once quit Russia fearing banishment to Siberia.<sup>9</sup> In 1882 in Berlin, where he staged a spectacular exhibition with an oriental décor and military music, the Kaiser forbade the Guard to attend, and the right-wing press attacked his paintings as misrepresenting war by omitting its enthusiasm, heroism and idealism.<sup>10</sup>

His work was well known in Britain and repeatedly cited in discussions on war pictures. He exhibited at the Crystal Palace in 1873, at South Kensington in 1879, at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1887 and the Crofton Gallery in 1900, attracting popular and press attention, praise and some controversy.<sup>11</sup> The Prince of Wales admired his

work and commissioned paintings of India.<sup>12</sup> He became known for his sensational realism, for "the delineation of whatever is startling and horrible in war".<sup>13</sup> In 1885 Helen Zimmern in the Art Journal claimed his realistic depiction of war should prove epoch-making and that, unlike conventional battle-painters, he painted realistic corpses and men suffering hideous wounds: "he shows what a gory, grimy, ghastly business it really is...Verestchagin spares us on details. We are to see the revers de la médaille, and that war is something else than champing steeds and flashing armour".<sup>14</sup> In 1887 the Art Journal, reviewing his exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery, called him "a prince among illustrators" who had shown "real genius", praised his "originality both of vision and treatment", and claimed his Russo-Turkish War battle pieces were "bold innovations upon the ordinary practice of battle painters".<sup>15</sup> His work was striking and poignant, and he was able to, "treat his idea with all the resources of modern realism and invest it with all the thrill of actuality".<sup>16</sup> It also, however, claimed he had major limitations. His art, though possibly the best of its kind, was not of the highest type, and he lacked the "grand or triumphant imagination" of the great artist: "He feels more deeply what is humanly interesting and touching in actual scenes than what is ideally noble on canvas".<sup>17</sup> Villiers, who met Vereshchagin in the Russo-Turkish War and admired him, also emphasised his unexpurgated realism and the contrast with conventional battle painting,

"I think of all painters of war, for pure realism  
of the ghastliness of the horrors of a battle,

one must give the palm to that great Russian painter. There was no mincing matters with him, none of the ordinary, neatly-folded, white bandage round a soldier's head, on which is the red spot denoting that the man is hors-de-combat; or the proverbial arm in sling, or the swathed foot. He would give the brutal course of a shell tearing men to pieces, and all the horrible débris of its track. It was the actuality of war with him".<sup>18</sup>

In 1900 Carter contrasted Meissonier's omission of the gruesome with Vereshchagin's portrayal: "The depicting of such horrors has been left to such a zealous realist as Vereshchagin, and to such an uncompromising recorder as the camera".<sup>19</sup> British artists and critics greatly admired him; Villiers believed him, with De Neuville, one of the two greatest war painters.<sup>20</sup>

Perceptions of his work's message varied, indicative of the extend perception of pictures was determined by preconceptions. Those denouncing "the awful scourge of war"<sup>21</sup> saw his paintings as condemning war. Helen Zimmern, for example, saw him as "the moralist among painters...he fights against barbarism and despotism".<sup>22</sup> She condemned conventional battle paintings and claimed that he "lifted the curtain off all this braggart untruth", and that his paintings, "preached ocularly, as it has never been preached before, the horror and misery induced upon people by this bloody sport of kings...Vereshchagin conceives war as one

vast misery, one terrible dance of death".<sup>23</sup> To pacifists also he was an eye-witness whose masterly paintings proclaimed evidence against war: "an artist who loves the truth has portrayed war scenes which approach so closely to the awful reality, that they deserve to be known by all who have sons or other dear ones liable to be led out to slaughter in the field".<sup>24</sup> Peace Society and other pacifist publications reproduced his works. Yet those with conventional attitudes to war and to battle painting saw his pictures as exceptionally realistic rather than unacceptably anti-war. The Prince of Wales who admired Lady Butler's work, and Villiers who admired Woodville's, both admired Vereshchagin's. His work was seen as complementary to, not as contradicting or invalidating conventional battle painting. His work was more realistic, more emphatic on the horrors of war, than was normally acceptable to his British contemporaries, who condemned horrific French paintings. Apparently he was regarded as a special case, his horror redeemed by his sincerity and moral purpose, whereas the French paintings were seen as immoral sensationalism.

6. VERESHCHAGIN: NOTES

1. European and North American art were essentially one culture, with some external influence, notably Japanese. Paintings were exhibited at the international exhibitions. The French authorities bought G.W. Joy's 'Joan of Arc', the Germans his 'Truth', Joy 51-2.
2. On Vereshchagin largely from (trans) F.H. Peters, Vassili Verestchagin; Autobiographical Sketches (1887); the British art press, especially Helen Zimmern, 'An Eastern Painter', AJ ('85); 'Vereshchagin', EB XXVII; G.H. Hamilton, The Art and Architecture of Russia (1954); 'Weretschagin', E. Bénézit, Dictionnaire critique... (Paris 1976)X; Robert Auty & Dimitry Obolensky, An Introduction to Russian Art and Architecture (1980).
3. Hamilton 249-50.
4. Vereshchagin 200.
5. Ib 275.
6. Auty & Obolensky 113-4.
7. Bénézit 694.
8. V.V. Vereshchagin, Exhibition of the Works of V. Vereshchagin (American Art Galleries, N.Y. 1888) 6-8, quo Hamilton 291.
9. Zimmern 41.
10. Bénézit 695, Zimmern 42.
11. Ib 12; AJ ('79) 142.
12. Zimmern 42.
13. AJ ('79) 142.
14. Zimmern 10, 40.
- 15-7. Anon, 'The Verestchagin Exhibition' AJ ('87) 382-3.
18. Villiers, Personalities 27-8.
19. Carter, War Artists 4.
20. Villiers, Personalities 24.
21. Zimmern 12.
22. Ib 42.
23. Ib 39, 42.
24. Wilhelm Carlsen, War as it is (The Peace Society, 1892) 17-18.

## 7. THE PACIFIST CRITIQUE

Vereshchagin remained exceptional among battle painters and no British battle painter attempted either his realism or his anti-war message. Yet while the conventional war artists, both special artists and home-based battle painters presented the orthodox and most widely-disseminated image of war, this was not unchallenged.<sup>1</sup> In their propaganda pacifists - and selective opponents of war such as some socialists - presented war as immoral, unchristian, destructive and wasteful, and causing immense suffering. They condemned war correspondents and war artists as fire-eating war-mongers who presented a false view of war.<sup>2</sup> They attempted to show the horror behind the orthodox image.<sup>3</sup> They criticised war artists' pictures, and they used pictures, of peace and war, in their own propaganda.<sup>4</sup>

One example of such pacifist propaganda was a small illustrated book published in 1892 by the Peace Society, Wilhelm Carlsen's War As It Is, a translation from Danish, dedicated to the President of the Danish Society for Peace and Neutralization: the pacifist movement had long been supranational and internationalist.<sup>5</sup> A moralistic tract, it condemned war as unchristian, evil and destructive, and claimed it could be prevented by removing the causes. Christian, emotional and sentimental, it appealed to parents, especially mothers. It emphasised the horror of war and the suffering caused, to combatants and civilians in the combat area and to bereaved families. It condemned militarist agitation, the lethality of present and future

weapons including aerial bombs,<sup>6</sup> armaments manufacture, and expenditure on defence instead of against poverty and destitution. It had many illustrations and its text was largely commentary on them. First were pictures of mothers and babies, illustrating maternal love; then pictures of the horrors of war, including David harrowing the Ammonites. Carlsen condemned war correspondents and public attitudes to war:

"This picture shows a war correspondent outside the line of battle. The bloodthirsty curiosity which drew no wide a circle of spectators in the days of ancient Rome is not dead. We meet with a great deal of it in the avidity with which people follow wars - those loathsome massacres of the inhabitants of any country".<sup>7</sup> (p12).

The picture showed a topied, brassarded correspondent scrambling among the smashed gabions, the wounded and dead. Carlsen accused correspondents of becoming demoralised, "intoxicated by scenes of blood at the seat of war". (p14). However, a correspondent, he claimed, could show the nature of war, and "he may expose the way in which art and poetry and newsvendors veil the infamous reality of war; their romantic phrases inducing even wives and mothers and daughters to sacrifice at its altar, without so much as admitting that it is something that ought to be protested against" (ib). Carlsen condemned "the sort of history that is prepared for the use of courts" (p15). He condemned Gros' painting of Bonaparte at Eylau as an example of such falsehood, of "this official lie" (p16): "Do you believe that a field on which 60,000 men are stretched bleeding on the



ground looks like that?" (p15). He reproduced pictures of cavalry charges and other battle scenes, and, using Tolstoy and other sources, condemned the horror and suffering. He described the agony of the wounded, "military incendiarism" (p32), sacrilege, killing and burial alive of wounded, robbing of corpses, and wild animals eating wounded stragglers. He denounced war as "brutal and shameless" (p24). He reproduced some of Vereshchagin's pictures including the 'Apotheosis of War'. He claimed that war artists deliberately concealed the reality of war:

"I have collected pictures in eight countries, but, with few exceptions, all labour to hide something from us. Men who are murdering are painted like actors in a play; the dead and wounded as in a stage scene" (p40).

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries there was increased defence and pacifist propaganda with sometimes a curious similarity between the content, though not the intended message, of each. Defence propaganda had long warned of the horrors of war, as necessitating military and naval preparedness. The National Service League, determined to overcome British antipathy to compulsory service, strove to maximise its impact by emphasising the horrors of a foreign invasion of Britain, with data essentially the same as those used by their ideological opponents, the pacifists. Both, for example, emphasised the plight of civilians in war and the *bestial* behaviour of soldiers in previous wars.<sup>8</sup> Possibly they influenced each other; but probably each if he read the other's propaganda used the data to reinforce his

own convictions, rejecting contrary conclusions. Villiers claimed Vereshchagin was one of the greatest war artists, and especially praised his 'All is quiet on the Shipka', a painting of a sentry frozen to death, reproduced and praised by Carlsen as pacifist propaganda.<sup>9</sup> Yet Villiers saw Vereshchagin's work only as exceptionally realistic, not as anti-war.

The influence of the pacifists' propaganda and their critique of the war artists' image of war, must be conjectural. However all indications, including volunteering for the Boer War and the Great War, were that it was very limited. Officially disapproved, without access to most of the press, and with few pacifists and, despite Quaker plutocrats, limited expenditure - pacifist propaganda was on a small scale and reached only a minority. Probably, like defence propaganda, it largely preached to the converted or, occasionally, the inconvertible. Its publications were bought probably only by those already committed or sympathetic or, occasionally, by opponents determined to attack them. They reached probably only a heterogeneous minority of Quakers, residual Cobdenites and miscellaneous adherents of ethical societies and labour churches. The war artists, not their pacifist critics, still expressed the dominant view of war.

7. THE PACIFIST CRITIQUE : NOTES

1. Some examples cited Lalumia 31.
2. Villiers, Villiers II 301.
3. For example, Reynold's News' 1899 description of a charge, attributed to Dickens, quo M. van Wyk Smith, 'The Poetry of War' in (ed) Peter Warwick, The South African War (1980) 294.
4. Partly to counter military painting, the French Arbitration Society commissioned a painting of men who worked for peace, exhibited in 1898, MA ('98) 495. The iconography of the anti-war movement needs further research.
5. Michael Howard, War and the Liberal Conscience (1978, '81) 31-51.
6. Carlsen 50-1.
7. Ib 12: on the Roman games analogy cf R. Kipling, The Light that Failed (1891, 1907) 59.
8. For example Carlsen; The Nation in Arms: The Journal of the National Service League (April 1910). Cf also, not N.S.L. but compulsionist propaganda, William Le Queux, The Invasion of 1910 (1906) and Lonsdale Hale, The Horrors of War in Great Britain (1910).
9. Villiers, Personalities 24,27-8; Carlsen 17-18.

### CHAPTER III. VICTORIAN WAR CORRESPONDENTS

Among those who influenced attitudes to war were the war correspondents. From the start they were controversial, and they have been variously criticised: for lying and faking news and, by some military authorities, as "drones" and for unjustified harmful criticism of the military and for revealing information to the enemy. Pacifists and leftists criticised them as part of a press conspiracy for jingoism, imperialism, armaments, aggression, "scares" and war. Before 1914, however, the view of them largely accepted was that of the correspondents themselves, propagated in their own writings, in press boosting of them and in adulatory works such as F.L. Bullard's Famous War Correspondents (1914), that they were heroic adventurers who endured hardship and risked death to secure the news. Joseph Hatton wrote in his Journalistic London (1882), "The adventures of war correspondents, their perils by flood and field, their splendid conduct in the heat of battle, their marvellous rides with dispatches, their strange escapes and their gallant deaths, would make a thrilling volume of heroic deeds".<sup>1</sup> In 1904 F.M. Thomas wrote, "How many war correspondents have died...on the field of glory since war correspondence first became a recognised pursuit? One thing is certain: they run more risks than soldiers"<sup>2</sup>

Attitudes to war correspondents were interrelated with attitudes to the press as a whole. Though some traditionalists and some radicals despised the late 19th

century new journalism, the press was generally accepted, respected and believed. The "Fourth Estate" was believed influential. W.T. Stead, a leading protagonist of the power of the press, in his 1886 article 'Government by Journalism' claimed the press, more than parliament, expressed the national will, and that it decisively influenced governments: "I have seen Cabinets upset...armies sent hither and thither, war proclaimed and war averted, by the agency of the newspapers".<sup>3</sup> The Crimean War, the Bulgarian atrocities agitation, jingoism, 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the sending of Gordon to Khartoum, naval and invasion scares and increased naval construction, were all seen as proof of the power and influence of the press. Despite the 1880 and 1906 elections, press credibility, and that of the war correspondents, largely continued.

"The news" in its modern sense was a 19th century creation.<sup>4</sup> The Victorian war correspondents were, with a few arguable exceptions, the first. Previously war news came largely from official sources: commanding officers' despatches, published by government and sometimes, like Bonaparte's bulletins, flagrant propaganda.<sup>5</sup> The Victorian war correspondents were part of the great expansion of the British press in the second half of the 19th century resulting from the combination of demographic, economic, social, educational and technological changes including expansion of the middle classes, advertising, and lower production costs,<sup>6</sup> and favourable political and governmental attitudes: the British became a "newspaperised people".<sup>7</sup> The Times,

then from the 1860s the Daily Telegraph until overtaken at the end of the century by the Daily Mail, had the world's largest daily-paper circulation. Victorian war correspondence developed from a relatively strong, prosperous and free press and governmental acquiescence in its becoming the primary purveyor of war news.<sup>8</sup> Victorian war correspondence may be seen as a laissez-faire interlude between 18th and 20th century war-news control. Throughout the Victorian period the authorities continued to publish commanders' despatches and sometimes a commander, notably Wolseley in the Ashanti War, tried to scoop the correspondents with his own version.<sup>9</sup> In the Boer War, with increased military control over correspondents, official despatches again became important sources of war news. Throughout the period military concern continued at the security risk from correspondents, and the issue was intermittently discussed in the press. The British authorities retained their powers to control, censor and expel correspondents, though in some colonial campaigns these were minimally enforced: in the Sudan in the early 'eighties correspondents were often given censorship forms already signed.<sup>10</sup> In the later 19th century the trend of opinion, among the military and correspondents, was towards tighter controls, and these were introduced in the Boer War and by the Japanese in the Russo-Japanese War. By the 'nineties such veterans as Russell and Forbes were lamenting that real war correspondence had ended. Forbes wrote in 1892 that in future the correspondent, "will be a mere transmitter by strictly defined channels of carefully revised intelligence liable to be altered, falsified, cancelled,

or detained at the discretion of the official set in authority over him".<sup>11</sup> By the time of the Russo-Japanese War Repington, The Times military correspondent, believed that, "more useful work could be done by a man who remained at the London nerve-centre than by war correspondents of the old type", whom the authorities would prevent telling the truth.<sup>12</sup> By then, however, an era of war correspondence had ended, which had begun with Russell in the Crimean War.

Though not the first war correspondent, the first important British war correspondent was William Howard Russell (1820-1907) in the Crimea.<sup>13</sup> There he established the concept and credibility of the war correspondent and, by his revelations and the resulting changes, a belief in the influence of war correspondents and a strong public support for them. As Forbes later wrote, "England had come to recognise that it was the pen of William Howard Russell which had saved her army from extinction".<sup>14</sup> Recognised as, "the first and greatest of war correspondents", he set the pattern of British war correspondence and influenced his successors. He wore military-style clothes and was armed. He exposed the horrors of inadequate hospitals and other military faults but he identified with the army and, describing battle, emphasised glory, drama and heroism and minimised horror and suffering. He named officers but other ranks remained anonymous, and he ignored the contrast between officers' and rankers' conditions. As the most famous Times correspondent he received credit for reporting in fact done by others, notably the exposure of the Scutari hospital conditions by

Thomas Chenery, their Constantinople correspondent. His reporting began the controversy in Britain on the role of war correspondents, their security risk and the control and censorship of them. The allegation that his reporting aided the enemy was made by Raglan and became part of the "classic list" of cases cited in support of censorship of war correspondents.<sup>15</sup> Others cited his Crimean achievement in support of war correspondents: for example, in 1908 the Newspaper Proprietors Association objected that proposed censorship legislation would have made it illegal to publish Russell's reports on the conditions of troops in the Crimea.<sup>16</sup>

His reporting of this one war made his reputation and established his career. He returned "Balacava Russell", acclaimed and lionised, "the most famous newspaper correspondent the world has ever seen".<sup>17</sup> Following Thackeray's example, in 1857 he lectured throughout the country on his Crimean experiences, gaining £1,600, over double his annual salary. The Times republished its Crimean war correspondence in two volumes, and Russell published a series of books based on his journalism though sometimes, as with his Canada: Its Defences, Condition and Resources (1865) from only brief and superficial acquaintance with his subject. He reported the Indian Mutiny, American Civil War, Austro-Prussian War, Franco-Prussian War, the Zulu War and various royal and aristocratic tours. He engaged in public controversy, notably in 1880 with Wolseley over the conduct of British troops in South Africa. Success as a war correspondent brought him fame, wealth and social



advancement. Highly paid and pensioned, he was awarded the Crimea and Mutiny medals, the Iron Cross, foreign orders and an honorary doctorate from his alma mater. In 1895 he was knighted. Partly because he had "a genius for friendship" and "an intense sense of enjoyment...like a great happy schoolboy",<sup>18</sup> he became a friend of the Prince of Wales and of the Dukes of Wellington and Sutherland and other aristocrats. He wrote an unsuccessful three-volume novel - he admitted in his diary, "there is frightful bosh in it" - and his rich friends enabled him in 1868 to stand as Conservative candidate at Chelsea where he was defeated by Dilke. In the Franco-Prussian War he failed to adapt to increased competition, speed and telegraphing, and was repeatedly scooped by Forbes and other Daily News correspondents. Thenceforth his career as a war correspondent declined, though he continued the honoured exemplar.

Following the Crimea he believed himself a military expert, pronounced on military controversies and sometimes disputed with generals. From 1860 most of his working life was spent editing the Army and Navy Gazette of which from 1864 he was proprietor. Impressed by the Prussian needle-gun, he urged British adaption of a similar weapon and on this he was cited in Parliament by General Peel, the War Secretary.<sup>19</sup> He also advocated the readoption of breech-loading artillery. His own experience mostly of great-power war, his military attitudes were largely continentalist. He advocated an army on a continental scale, and conscription. Little interested in the navy, he argued that not British seapower but continental armies

had defeated Napoleon. After the Boer War he criticised those who advocated replacing cavalry by mounted infantry, "as if we were never to meet enemies but Boers or fight anywhere but in S. Africa...God help the British Army that fights in Europe with S. African tactics!"<sup>20</sup> As his authorised biographer J.B. Atkins wrote, "he took the characteristically Continental view of an Army rather than the characteristically English view".<sup>21</sup> He also in the 'eighties and 'nineties warned against physical deterioration and decline in the physique of recruits. Atkins claimed that Russell was "the auctor et fundator of all the duties which special correspondents have since undertaken".<sup>22</sup> Though never as successful and honoured as Russell, Forbes and other correspondents largely followed the pattern he set. Their careers and contributions to military thinking and to the public image of war can be fully understood only in the context of Russell.

War correspondence emerged as a profession during and after the Crimean War, largely because of Russell, and contemporaries regarded the period from the Crimea to the Boer War as its golden age. There were frequent and varied wars, minimal official restrictions on correspondents, quick transmission of reports by telegraph and ocean cable, and strong public demand for war news. Editors wanted it because it increased sales, though journalists sometimes argued, against accusations of war-mongering, that war was not in the press's interest as the return was less than the exceptional expenses.<sup>23</sup> Exceptional war news - like exceptional home news such as the Mordaunt verdict - brought

exceptional sales increases: the Standard evening edition reporting Tel-el-Kebir sold half a million copies, compared to the usual 230,000 of the morning and evening editions combined.<sup>24</sup> Reporting war, especially telegraphing - during the Afghan War W.H. Mudford, editor of the Standard, paid £800 for one cable despatch, and Lucy Brown has recently suggested that not the newspapers but the telegraph companies were the chief beneficiaries from overseas wars<sup>25</sup> - was expensive for the papers and sometimes difficult for the correspondents, "under wildly perplexing conditions" with unclear and unreliable evidence and the pressures of competition.<sup>26</sup> The necessity of speed rather than accuracy caused correspondents to send unverified statements which, if proved wrong, might discredit their papers: for example, the Daily Mail's 1900 report of the massacre of the Peking legations.<sup>27</sup> After 1870 reliance on telegraphing sometimes distorted reporting, as in the Boer War where correspondents largely stayed by the telegraphs and missed important operations elsewhere. Occasionally correspondents falsified news and were denounced by their rivals: William Maxwell, a veteran war correspondent, wrote of the correspondent, far from the fighting, "in some distant and safe retreat, he weaves romances out of official bulletins, and meets the insistent demand for a daily 'story' by inventing battles at any time and place".<sup>28</sup>

Those who worked primarily as war correspondents, formed a relatively small group largely based on London: J.J. Mathews later argued that war correspondence was, strictly speaking, a profession only for a brief period of

late nineteenth century colonial wars.<sup>29</sup> In larger wars the professional correspondents were outnumbered by the many other reporters. Maxwell wrote in 1913 that, "twenty years ago the company of war correspondents was small and select", but that in the 1898 Sudan campaign of the sixteen correspondents "only six or seven were trained newspaper men", and in the Boer War there was "a plague of bogus correspondents".<sup>30</sup> Journalism was an open profession and professional war correspondents were typical of journalists, from varied middle-class families. For example Hilary Skinner (1839-94), Russell's rival, was the son of a Queen's Counsel, a London law graduate and a barrister. An exceptional linguist, he reported the 1864 Danish War for the Daily News and became its leading war correspondent, reporting the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian wars, compiling books from his journalism, and standing as a Liberal parliamentary candidate. War correspondents were often Scottish or Irish. Sometimes staff-officers, boasting their commander - for example Maurice as Daily News correspondent in the Ashanti War - and sometimes ambitious young officers, notably Churchill, functioned as war correspondents, but neither were typical correspondents.<sup>31</sup> Some became war correspondents by chance, from other journalism: for example Russell or later G.W. Steevens. Some already had military interests and experience: G.A. Henty had served as a commissariat officer in the Crimea, and Forbes as a private of Dragoons. The successful correspondents, "of the adventurous school of war correspondents, of which Archibald Forbes was the leading spirit",<sup>32</sup> had common characteristics. Though some began

without military knowledge or experience of armies, they were journalists with the qualities necessary for successful journalism: intuition for what attracted editors and readers, initiative and energy in procuring and transmitting news, ability to socialise, gain and exploit useful contacts, and ability to write vividly and dramatically. They had physical and mental toughness and stamina. In an age of hero-worship they saw themselves as heroic adventurers facing danger and death. This was a repeated theme of their writings: they repeatedly cited Forbes' ride after Ulundi. They were romantics who romanticised themselves and created their own mythology, part of the wider 19th century mythology of adventure, exploration, war and empire. They expressed this by their appearance: broad-brimmed hat or fur cap, patch-pocketed jacket, campaign ribbons, straps, belts, pouches and guns, upturned moustache and challenging arrogant stare. Captain Cairnes wrote of a correspondent, "dressed in the most curious parody of a military uniform."<sup>33</sup> They were proud of their achievements and their man-of-the-world toughness, and emphasised their hard drinking: Forbes, exhausted, revived himself with champagne. Their values were largely those of the officers they accompanied, though sometimes more bellicose,<sup>34</sup> and they presented themselves as men of action not littérateurs. They were often armed and in colonial wars such as in Ashanti and in the Sudan, sometimes fought in battle. They resented Wolseley's denigration of them as drones, and asserted their combatant role and services: fighting, helping the wounded, providing information and carrying despatches. As they repeatedly insisted, their work was dangerous, with a high mortality

from battle and disease. Correspondents died with Hicks Pasha, and on the Gordon Relief Expedition and reconquest of the Sudan. Thirteen died in the Boer War. Some considered them a new type of eyewitness historian: Forbes claimed their work was a crucial source of military history.<sup>35</sup>

Most officers, however, disagreed with the war correspondents' high opinion of themselves. Officers had ill-defined and varied relations with the press and with war correspondents. The press could benefit or harm officers. Writing for the press - as did Wolseley, Roberts, Wood, Kitchener, G.S. Clarke and others - brought income and influence. The press could boost an officer's reputation and advocate military change he wanted, or by criticism could harm his prospects. Officers were much aware of the press and while the Duke of Cambridge and some conservative generals disliked war correspondence and what they saw as press interference and regarded journalists as social inferiors, ambitious commanders such as Wolseley and Roberts tried to use the press. Wolseley in the Zulu War had officers on his staff employed as correspondents by The Times and Daily News, a practice Russell deplored as preventing impartial criticism and leading to the corruption of the press and destruction of its influence.<sup>36</sup> With the notable exception of Kitchener officers were usually friendly and helpful to correspondents who could boost their reputations. Melton Prior noted Wolseley's affability on campaigns and Roberts similarly helped them. The relationship was more often symbiotic than adversarial. Correspondents often depended on the army for transport,

supplies, communications and information, and functioned better with officers' goodwill, while acquaintance with aristocratic officers offered the opportunity of social as well as professional advantage. Correspondents often admired officers and willingly eulogised them, and the press boosted the reputations of Wolseley, Roberts and later French.<sup>37</sup> Correspondents were sometimes invited to lecture to officers, at the Royal United Service Institution and elsewhere. Commanders disliked correspondents' criticism and tried to prevent it by censorship or, that failing, expulsion. During the Afghan War Roberts expelled Macpherson of the Standard, and in the 1885 Burma War General Prendergast expelled E.K. Moylan of The Times.<sup>38</sup> Following both episodes the press and politicians made trouble for the generals responsible. These episodes, however, were exceptional. T.H.S. Escott, experienced journalist and editor of the Fortnightly Review wrote that, "Throughout the Victorian Age the relations between the journalist and the general were on the whole those of mutual goodwill and reciprocal assistance...The new entente between sword and pen worked in the interests of all concerned".<sup>39</sup>

Yet within the "new entente" there was ambiguity and tension and public cordiality sometimes masked private animosity: for example, with Wolseley. He believed the press influential, accumulated press cuttings, and cultivated, helped and used journalists including war correspondents: he gave Sala and Alfred Austin Zulu weapons. His fame resulted largely from the press. Yet in his

Soldier's Pocket-Book he denigrated war correspondents as "curses to armies", "drones" who revealed information to the enemy and who should be licensed, controlled and censored.<sup>40</sup> His hostility was reinforced by the trouble they caused him: Forbes' 1878 exposure of Cyprus conditions, then Russell's 1879-80 exposure of troops' misconduct in Natal, and criticism in the Army and Navy Gazette of his strategy in 1882 and 1884. Privately he condemned the press as a "monstrous humbug" and stated his loathing and contempt for war correspondents: as fawning, bribing, lying and reporting rumour as fact.<sup>41</sup> Alleging they were ignorant camp-followers, he dismissed their pretensions to military expertise.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, ambitious to be Commander-in-Chief, he continued to conciliate journalists. In 1887, about to be interviewed, he wrote to his wife, "Shall I never be strong enough to tell reporters how I dislike their trade? What a world of shams and humbug we live in, never telling the whole, seldom even half the truth!"<sup>43</sup> In 1890 he entertained Stead who was writing an article on him: "He is a sort of man who in days of active revolution might be a serious danger. I looked at him, thinking if it should ever be my lot to have to hang or shoot him".<sup>44</sup>

War-reporting offered opportunities and rewards. The most successful correspondents gained wealth, fame and honours and rose socially: loot, higher pay and expenses, ribbons, medals and decorations, honorary doctorates, royal and aristocratic acquaintances and invitations. Following Russell's example, they gave public lectures: "in their war-paint or in evening dress



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a la Forbes, their coats ablaze with foreign orders, or hanging from ribbons round their necks. They appear in the limelight".<sup>45</sup> They gained increased readership for their books, more opportunities to express their views, and the exultation of celebrity. Escott wrote that Russell's and Forbes' feats made them, "national heroes, to whose familiar laurels no fresh leaf remains to add".<sup>46</sup> Some asserted themselves as military experts, pronouncing analysis, prescription and even prophecy. They influenced public attitudes to war and defence through varied mutually-reinforcing media: war correspondence with its impact of immediacy, lectures, articles, books and sometimes fiction. Henty became famous for his boys' fiction, and Forbes wrote a novel and short stories.

Their success depended on the acceptability of their copy to the military, editors and readers, but because they largely shared the same values this was usually no constraint on correspondents. Their war correspondence was determined more by their own values, perceptions and self-censorship than by external controls. They largely shared officers' attitudes and usually identified with the forces they accompanied. Maxwell wrote that the correspondent, "in loyally serving the Army he serves best in the end the public, his newspaper and himself."<sup>47</sup> Like many officers, they were enthusiastic for more war experience, as was expressed in their memoirs and by Kipling, a journalist who knew them, in The Light that Failed. They accepted war and the army, and saw war as justified, as a challenge, opportunity and adventure; as a scene of courage, heroism and endurance.

They did not ignore war's horrors but saw them in this wider context, as a high but necessary price and as increasing military achievement. The horrors of war were to them a necessary part of war, but did not dominate it. Their descriptions of them were usually not specific and detailed. As newspaper sales indicated, the public shared their perception of war as excitement and adventure, identifying and participating vicariously. Some likened wars to spectator sports. Kipling wrote of correspondents in The Light that Failed, "You're sent out when a war begins, to minister to the blind, brutal British public's thirst for blood. They have no arenas now, but they must have special correspondents."<sup>48</sup> Through their varied media the war correspondents, with the war artists and the studio-based battle-painters, contributed significantly to shaping perceptions of war, and also to the major military controversies. However in the serious consideration of campaigns, weapons, strategy and tactics they were probably less influential than the press defence writers, analysts and commentators, back in Britain. Nevertheless these, like the public, depended on the correspondents, whatever their faults. Some men, like Archibald Forbes, at different times attempted both roles.

From the Crimea onwards, though war correspondents were usually accepted and favourably regarded, there was intermittent controversy on them, in which they participated: largely repeating the controversy over Russell in the Crimea. Some officers criticised them for ignorance and pretension to military expertise, distortion, inaccuracy,

under-mining morale and revealing information to the enemy. Others criticised them for swaggering self-advertisement and sensationalism. In 1885 the Saturday Review condemned the excessive praise of them, their pretensions, demands for admiration, and irresponsible boosting of certain officers who helped them.<sup>49</sup> Radicals and pacifists condemned their bellicist values: the Peace Society publication War as it is (1892) condemned correspondents "intoxicated by scenes of blood" encouraging support for war.<sup>50</sup> The correspondents and others who championed them, argued their beneficial achievement: informing the public, encouraging recruiting and support for defence, revealing faults and failures, and causing reforms. J.B. Atkins claimed that they were, "the unofficial scrutineers, the umpires representing the democracy...the Army cannot form an impartial estimate of its own actions."<sup>51</sup>

VICTORIAN WAR CORRESPONDENTS: NOTES

1. Joseph Hatton, Journalistic London (1882) 170. My account of war correspondents is primarily as an introduction to my studies of Forbes and Steevens, and is partly from Archibald Forbes, Memories and Studies of War and Peace (1895); T.H.S. Escott, Masters of English Journalism (1911); John Black Atkins, The Life of Sir William Howard Russell (1911); F. Lauriston Bullard, Famous War Correspondents (1914); Joseph J. Mathews, Reporting the Wars (1957); Philip Knightley, The First Casualty (1975); Lucy Brown, Victorian News and Newspaper (1985). Some recent coverage is Vietnam-dominated and anachronistically judges earlier correspondents by American anti-Vietnam-War journalists, e.g. Knightley; Open U, U202.
2. F.M. Thomas, Fifty Years of Fleet Street (1904) 117. Cf A. Forbes, My Experiences of the War between France and Germany (1871) I 30,34,55,56,61,334.
3. W.T. Stead, 'Government by Journalism', Contemp. R. XLIX (May 1886) 664. Cf Brown 191, 227.
4. Brown 1.
5. On pre-Victorian war news v Mathews Chapters 3,4.
6. Anthony Smith, The Newspaper (1979) 106-22; Brown 5-30.
7. Atkins II 373. Atkins had been a war correspondent for the Manchester Guardian in Cuba, the Graeco-Turkish War and South Africa, William Haley et al, C.P. Scott 1846-1932 (1946) 38,123,146.
8. See also Lt. James Ross, 1879, WO 33/32 quo Brown 159.
9. Mathews 223, 229.
10. Ib 203. On censorship v also Brown 158-9.
11. Forbes, Memories 216.
12. C.à C. Repington, Vestigia (1919) 253.
13. My account of Russell is to show the pattern he established, for comparison with Forbes and Steevens, and is largely from Forbes, Memories; Atkins, DNB, EB, Mathews.

14. A. Forbes, Barracks, Bivouacs and Battles (1891, 1910) 319. For a revisionist interpretation of the British army in the Crimea and of Russell's reporting v Hew Strachan, Wellington's Legacy: The Reform of the British Army 1830-1854 (1984).
15. Mathews 197.
16. P. Towle, 'The Debate on Wartime Censorship in Britain 1902-14', (ed) B. Bond & I. Roy, War and Society (1975) 111.
17. Quo Atkins I 1,8.
18. Mary Jeune, Memories of Fifty Years (1909) 54.
19. Quo Atkins II 142.
20. Quo ib 369.
21. Ib 357.
22. Ib Iv.
23. Forbes, Experience I 2; Barracks 308; Escott 335-6; Mathews 4-5; R. Pound & Harmsworth, Northcliffe (1959) 326. Cf the 1878 parody of the 'Jingo' song, "Of course they want a war because/It makes the papers sell", quo Penny Summerfield, 'Patriotism and Empire: Music-Hall entertainment' in (ed) J.M. MacKenzie, Imperialism and Popular Culture (1986) 38.
24. Brown, Victorian News 30; ib, 'The Treatment of News in mid-Victorian Newspapers', TRHS 5th Series XXVII (1977) 27.
25. Hatton 141; Brown, Victorian News 15.
26. Atkins II 372.
27. Pound & Harmsworth 248-9; Peter Fleming, The Siege at Peking (1959, '65) 138-42.
28. W. Maxwell, 'The War Correspondent in Sunshine and Eclipse,' Nineteenth C. LXXIII (Mar 1913) 620.
29. Mathews 241.
30. Maxwell 609-11.

31. On officer correspondents v Mathews 230, 241-2.
32. 'Melton Prior', DNB.
33. W.E. Cairnes, The Coming Waterloo (1901) 52.
34. Atkins I 247.
35. Mathews 261; A. Forbes, 'Errors of the Experts',  
Contemp. R. LV (Mar '89) 347.
36. Russell to Editor of D. Telegraph, 13 Jan '80 quo  
Atkins II 296.
37. R. Holmes, The Little Field-Marshal (1981) 69, 119.
38. F. Roberts, Forty-one Years in India (1900) 374-5;  
D. James, The Life of Lord Roberts (1954) 94-6;  
A.T.Q. Stewart, The Pagoda War (1972) 118-31.
39. Escott 355-6.
40. G.J. Wolseley, The Soldier's Pocket-Book (1871) 82,  
86. He also advocated using them to deceive the  
enemy, 225. Wolseley is, since the mutilation of  
Roberts' papers, the best-documented Victorian  
general.
41. Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 2 Jan '80, quo E.M. Spiers,  
The Army and Society 1815-1914 (1980)215; Wolseley's  
journal 19,21 Dec '84, 10 Jan '85, (ed) A. Preston,  
In Relief of Gordon: Lord Wolseley's Campaign  
Journal of the Khartoum Relief Expedition (1967)  
83, 95, 113-4.
42. 21 Dec '84, ib 75.
43. Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 24 Feb '87, (ed) G. Arthur,  
The Letters of Lord and Lady Wolseley 1870-1911  
(1922) 243. Cf Atkins II, 306.
44. Ib 8 Aug '90, 264.
45. H. Furniss, My Bohemian Days (1919)136. Cf Successful  
special war artists.
46. Escott 249.
47. Maxwell 623.
48. R. Kipling, The Light that Failed (1891)59. See also  
ib 19.
49. Anon, 'The War Correspondent', Saturday R. LIX  
(27 June '85) 843.
50. W. Carlsen, War as it is (1892) 14.
51. Atkins II 384.

## CHAPTER IV. ARCHIBALD FORBES

### 1. THE CAREER OF ARCHIBALD FORBES

Excepting only Russell, the most successful and famous Victorian war correspondent was Archibald Forbes (1838-1900), whom Russell himself called, "that incomparable Archibald".<sup>1</sup> He "helped invent war correspondence in the modern sense of the term" and, "with a halo of journalistic romance", became the archetype of the adventurous war correspondent.<sup>2</sup> He was praised by other journalists, honoured by foreign governments, "the most decorated journalist who ever lived",<sup>3</sup> and in 1884 awarded a doctorate honoris causa by Aberdeen University. He was deemed worthy of entries in Men of the Time, the D.N.B. and Britannica, and of a memorial in St. Paul's Cathedral. He was born in Morayshire, Scotland, one of nine children of a Presbyterian minister, Lewis W.F. Forbes, a graduate and in 1851 a D.D. of Aberdeen University. He grew up in the highland village in the north of Scotland that was the background of much of his later reminiscences and fiction: throughout his life he loved the highlands. Most Scottish education was not socio-economically segregated as in England and he and his brothers, with the laird's son and the farmers' and labourers' children, attended the parish school, which he later described in 'An Honest-Born Boy'.<sup>4</sup> His father intended him for the ministry and he attended Aberdeen University from 1853 to 1855. He passed in classics but failed in mathematics and, as he later wrote, "follies and extravagance abruptly terminated my university career", and he left without graduating.<sup>5</sup> A drifter,

"one of the men who thrust poverty upon themselves",<sup>6</sup> after his father's death he lived in Edinburgh and spent his inheritance without deciding on a career. In the winter of 1857 he heard Russell lecture on the Crimea at the Edinburgh Music Hall and Russell's description of Balaclava inspired him with enthusiasm for the cavalry and later influenced him towards enlisting in the Dragoons. Coming of age in 1859 he inherited a further £2,500, and emigrated to Canada. Again he squandered his inheritance, allegedly much of it on a love affair in Quebec and, working his passage to Liverpool, returned penniless.

In London he enlisted in the Royal Dragoons.<sup>7</sup> He was stationed in Ireland, largely at Dublin, and from 1861 at various provincial barracks in England, and his family supplemented his pay by a small remittance. Educated men were then rare in the ranks and he became unit schoolmaster and acting quartermaster sergeant. The Royals, the oldest regiment of cavalry of the line, had distinguished themselves in the charge of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava. He bought beer for the old troopers who talked of the Crimea: "I was saturating myself with practical soldierhood, while the grizzled veterans were swilling my beer".<sup>8</sup> As heavy cavalry the Royals were exempt from service in India, and for forty-three years from the Crimea to the Boer War had no active service. In the 'sixties they were busy with training, reviews and intermittent aid to the civil power in England - sending detachments to assist the magistrates at Guildford in 1863 and Nottingham in 1866 - and in Ireland, a duty soldiers disliked and which Forbes chose to ignore in his writing on the army. In his spare



time he studied military history and theory, in the evenings devoting, "three happy hours in the regimental library over the pages of Napier, or in the tougher wrestle with the problems of Jomini",<sup>9</sup> and also wrote pseudonymous articles on the army. He enjoyed the army: he later wrote that he had a natural affinity for soldiering, and that for him the glamour never died. He was always proud that he had been a private of Dragoons. In 1867 he left the army, his discharge paper marked "good" and became a journalist in London.

Although the press was expanding, competition among aspirant journalists was hard. Many "penny-a-liner" journalists struggled but few could gain the relative security of a salaried post on a leading paper. At first Forbes did miscellaneous journalism including for the penny daily Morning Star and its evening edition the Evening Star which published varied articles providing opportunities for aspirant writers.<sup>10</sup> Started in 1856 with primarily political purpose, The Morning Star was "the organ of the party led by Cobden and Bright", first edited by Bright's brother-in-law Samuel Lucas, with Bright on its board of management and often in the editor's office; extreme radical, demanding manhood suffrage, opposing war and annexation, and denounced by opponents as "peace-at-any-price". It was edited from 1864 to 1868 by Justin McCarthy who accepted the first article Forbes submitted to a daily paper. It seemed an unusual paper for Forbes, a bellicist ex-regular, but it paid him. A struggling journalist, he largely relied on the military sketches he contributed to its

'Starlight' column. He also part-owned, edited and wrote an unprofitable weekly, the London Scotsman, for which he wrote a serial story on the Indian Mutiny, based partly on his conversations with a highland veteran, and which he later published as a three-volume novel, Drawn From Life. He also did miscellaneous journalism, including music criticism of which he was ignorant, for the Morning Advertiser, a 3d organ of the drink trade, Whig in politics and edited by a fellow Morayshire Scot, James Grant.

In Britain and elsewhere the Franco-Prussian War aroused much interest. Papers sent many correspondents - the Daily News seventeen, the New York Herald allegedly twenty - including their star reporters: The Times Russell, the Telegraph G.A. Sala, and the Daily News Hilary Skinner.<sup>11</sup> As Lucy Brown has shown, the war dominated and changed the British daily newspapers, and it increased their circulations.<sup>12</sup> British concern was expressed also in the British ambulances and private and later governmental relief operations in France.<sup>13</sup> The Daily News French Peasant Relief Fund raised £22,000: their red and black star badge was, by permission, also used by the Quaker relief organization and is still used by the Society of Friends. The Daily Telegraph, the Lord Mayor's Relief Fund and various ad hoc organizations also contributed, and at the end of the war the government sent food to revictual starving Paris. Men eager for war experience hurried to France, among them Kitchener and Dilke. Some of the lesser papers sent correspondents and Grant, impressed by Forbes' war fiction, 'Drawn from Life', sent Forbes. He had long dreamed of

being a war correspondent but not thought it possible. He spoke German and, impressed by H.M. Hozier's Seven Weeks' War and his other reading on the Prussian army he believed the Germans would win, and accompanied their forces. He was an unknown correspondent with little money and no horse, travelling by public transport or walking with his knapsack on his back. He lacked the means to expedite his reports. As he later wrote, "I saw then more, perhaps, of the realities of actual hard fighting than I ever did later; but to what purpose? All that I could do was to drop my missives into the feldpost waggon, to a belated and precarious fate".<sup>14</sup> He reported well but in September Grant, wanting to economise, recalled him and refused his last despatch. Proud and angry, Forbes attempted to offer his services to The Times but, unable to see the editor, left for elsewhere.<sup>15</sup>

Forbes next applied to the Daily News and was immediately interviewed by its general manager J.R. Robinson.<sup>16</sup> The Daily News, founded in 1846 by Dickens and from 1868 priced at one penny, was a leading Liberal paper which in 1870 absorbed its Liberal rival the Morning Star. It was owned by a syndicate of rich Liberals which included Samuel Morley and from 1869 Henry Labouchere with possibly a quarter share, in which no one person was dominant. As Stephen Koss and Lucy Brown have recently shown, politicians had close connections with the press and used their own or party funds to subsidise papers. The Daily News proprietors from 1868 invested much to launch it as a mass-circulation daily and organ of party propaganda. It became a quasi-

official party organ, its editor F.H. Hill briefed by Liberal politicians including Granville, Dilke and Gladstone's secretary Algernon West, and receiving both instruction and exclusive information. Thus 'political' money financed the Daily News Franco-Prussian war correspondence, which had to function within the constraints of Liberal Party policy. The proprietors delegated the running of the paper to Robinson, general manager from 1868 to 1901 and editor from 1887 to 1896. His biographer wrote that he acted "as the proprietor acts when a paper belongs to an individual", but this was only partly true and he complained of the proprietors' repeated interference. He appointed staff and instructed correspondents. A Unitarian and committed Liberal in the Dissenting tradition, with "an intense faith in Mr. Gladstone", he was in the London Liberal establishment and was later awarded a knighthood by Gladstone. Dynamic and enterprising, his journalistic success was partly from his flair in selecting correspondents: for example MacGahan to investigate the Bulgarian atrocities. Robinson was already impressed by Forbes' army articles and war correspondence and had inquired about him. When Forbes offered his services Robinson seized his opportunity and immediately employed him at a high salary, £20 a week, and expenses, and sent him back to the war with £100 in French gold coins. Previously correspondents had telegraphed brief summaries of their news and posted full reports, so papers carried a confusing mixture of new and stale news. Robinson, following the American example and with finance probably provided by Labouchere, instructed

correspondents to telegraph their full reports. He also made a reciprocal agreement with G.W. Smalley of the New York Tribune which initially much benefited the Daily News through the enterprise and use of telegraphing of the young American reporters. Later in the war when the D.N.'s coverage improved and outstripped its competitors, the agreement was more to the Tribune's advantage.<sup>17</sup>

Robinson's decision to employ him launched Forbes' career. In France he attached himself to the Saxon army and gained the goodwill and coöperation of the Crown Prince of Saxony and his staff. He reported the war from the siege and fall of Metz to the siege and fall, in January 1871, of Paris. His reports were vivid, dramatic and outstandingly successful. With the D.N. he had the resources enabling him to use his ability as a correspondent. Yet, as he admitted, he and other British correspondents were initially slow to change their methods, and missed opportunities. In October 1870 an unknown American, Müller, telegraphed news of the fall of Metz from Luxembourg to the D.N. Forbes claimed it was, "the greatest journalistic coup of our time on this side of the Atlantic" which "at a stroke revolutionised war correspondence in the Old World".<sup>18</sup> Forbes, shocked, learned from it and improved his methods of expediting his copy, including telegraphing from outside the area of military control. His contacts with German officers, ingenuity and planning of his communications, and his own riding and endurance, enabled him to repeatedly scoop his rivals including Russell and other Times correspondents.

The Times tried to hire him but he refused. He later proudly described some of his methods in 'War Correspondence as a Fine Art', including his arrangement with the telegraph-master at Saarbrücken to whom he posted his reports, which were then telegraphed.<sup>19</sup> He did not there mention however, one of his methods. He received information on forthcoming operations from the Prince's staff, telegraphed reports of them before they happened to the D.N. which set them up in print, then when they began telegraphed to London to print "intelligent anticipation as a record of accomplished fact".<sup>20</sup> Thus at Avron and St. Denis he was able to report the German bombardments before his rivals.<sup>21</sup> After the surrender of Paris he entered the city and reported the situation: according to Bullard, "one of the most thrilling stories a daily newspaper ever printed".<sup>22</sup> In March he reported the German review at Longchamps then returned to London and began to hurriedly compile from his war correspondence a rushed 'instant history', My Experiences of the War between France and Germany, his first book. Robinson urged him to report the Commune but he refused until he had completed his book, then in May went to Paris. With his usual ingenuity and daring he managed to enter Paris and meet the Commune's last commander Dombrowski, witnessed some of the final fighting and narrowly escaped summary execution as a communard. He later wrote that conditions for correspondents there, "were more full of peril than one could incur in any battle of which I have had experience...in the seething turmoil of the last days of the Commune, bullets were flying from front, flanks and near. There was a universal raving lust for blood".<sup>23</sup>

The Franco-Prussian War was decisive for Forbes and for the Daily News. Before the war Forbes had been a drifter and a failure, one of the many struggling to survive on the fringes of London journalism. The war established his reputation as a leading war correspondent and began his career as the Daily News star special correspondent which continued until he retired. The D.N.'s war correspondence excelled that of its rivals: Morris of The Times lamented, "The D.N. has beaten us hollow, and continues to do so".<sup>24</sup>

The journalistic lesson of the war was apparently that competently-written long personal despatches by special correspondents attracted readers and were worth the expense, including that of telegraphing:<sup>25</sup> in the following years Robinson applied this lesson, using Forbes. Public interest in the war increased newspaper circulations and led to the launching of new papers, some of which ended in 1871 with the ending of the "feverish demand" for war news.<sup>26</sup> The D.N.'s Franco-Prussian war correspondence trebled its sales - from 50,000 to 150,000 though after the war falling to about 90,000 - and so increased its advertising revenue.<sup>27</sup>

The war ended its financial troubles and raised it from a struggling second-rank paper to a firm position as one of the four leading London daily papers with the Times, Telegraph and Standard, though it never attained The Times' prestige or the Telegraph's circulation: by 1880 the Telegraph's circulation was 300,000, the D.N.'s 100,000.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless the war "lifted the paper from a losing property into a haven of fame and prosperity" and established it as a financial success, "a power in the land and a splendid commercial property" paying some twenty percent

and yielding its proprietors "a princely revenue".<sup>29</sup> The 'seventies were its heyday of profit, fame and influence. Its circulation increased advertising revenue: the 'seventies City boom brought lucrative company-promotional full-page advertisements.<sup>30</sup> Its financial success in turn enabled further journalistic success through sending special correspondents and paying high telegraphic costs. In 1876 it achieved its greatest influence when its reports, especially by J.A. MacGahan, led to the Bulgarian atrocities agitation. Forbes' D.N. employment contributed to and coincided with its heyday: after retirement, with the competition of the halfpenny papers and other advertising media and the decline of middle-class Liberalism, the D.N. declined.

The Daily News continued to employ Forbes largely overseas and as a war correspondent, and Robinson continued to praise and encourage him. Forbes enjoyed his work: it was, he wrote, "an avocation of singular fascination", its drama contrasting with "the tameness of civilian life".<sup>31</sup> His success resulted from "a rare combination of qualities".<sup>32</sup> He had "a splendid physique that enabled him to perform feats of endurance that would have killed other men".<sup>33</sup> He was confident, brave, physically and mentally tough, and a good horseman. He realised the importance of speed, and expedited his copy: he later wrote, "The best organiser of the means for expediting his intelligence, he it is who is the most successful man".<sup>34</sup> Disregarding Robinson's advice to "keep away from those 'shell-swept slopes'"<sup>35</sup> he repeatedly risked death, and he accomplished exceptional journeys with his reports. Villiers wrote that he was



"a man of grand physique and great courage, and never seemed to know what fatigue was...he never spared himself. It was a sheer impossibility for any colleague to attempt to compete with Forbes".<sup>36</sup> His exploits, publicised by the Daily News and other papers, brought him fame: F.M. Thomas later wrote, "all these things are written in the history of his time, and will ever form part and parcel of the annals of journalistic enterprise".<sup>37</sup> His correspondence was clear, vivid and dramatic. He was proud, immodest, truculent and critical, and made enemies as well as admirers. Some resented as presumptuous his criticism of generals: "Some of his criticisms of Lord Chelmsford were held in certain quarters to have been unnecessarily offensive...he had outgrown any semblance of diffidence in passing judgement upon difficult military operations".<sup>38</sup> Contemporaries agreed on his quality as a correspondent, but disagreed on his character. Frederick Villiers, long his friend, admired and repeatedly praised him.<sup>39</sup> Harry Furniss, however, hostilely caricatured him and vilified him as bad-tempered, arrogant and exhibitionist, and he was accused of over-readiness to prophesy, rashness in forming opinions and claiming for himself other correspondents' feats.<sup>40</sup>

In the years after 1871 the London dailies faced declining or static post-war circulations, and competition among themselves and from the provincial papers which - with provincial prosperity and loyalties and using Reuters, the Press Association and news from the London press - were in their heyday, pushing back the circulation of the London

papers. The London dailies wanted exclusive copy to retain public attention. The provincial papers - small-staffed and unable to afford the high costs, especially telegraphic, of overseas reporting - could not compete in war and other overseas news with the London dailies, which tried to exploit this advantage. So they apparently tried to repeat their success in the Franco-Prussian War by using their special correspondents on assignments which would arouse public interest and increase circulation.<sup>41</sup> The Daily News used Forbes, their star correspondent. In 1872 he reported Joseph Arch's agricultural labourers' movement: Arch believed his "powerful articles" crucial in bringing public sympathy and donations.<sup>42</sup> In 1873 he reported the Vienna exhibition, and from 1872 to 1874 he reported the Carlist wars at various times with the Carlist, Republican and Alfonsoist forces: on which later he was oddly silent, unlike with his other wars neither writing articles nor citing it. In 1874 he reported the Bengal famine - where he met Roberts then Deputy Quartermaster-General and supervising relief operations - and in 1875 and 1876 the Prince of Wales' tour of India. In 1876 he reported the Serbian War, where he met and befriended the young special artist of the Graphic, Frederick Villiers: "I adopted him as 'my boy' before our first interview was over. We loved each other from the first". They worked together and remained close friends.<sup>43</sup> Villiers described Forbes there as, "the most striking figure in the whole of this busy scene...a tall, well-knit man in knickers and jacket of homespun with tam-o'-shanter bonnet cocked over his handsome, sunburnt face and a cherry-wood pipe protruding from beneath his tawny moustache".<sup>44</sup>

In 1877 with Villiers and the American J.A. MacGahan, famous for reporting the Bulgarian atrocities, reported the Russo-Turkish War with the Russian armies, risking death in battle and from marauding bashi bazouks. His feats included his epic ride in August bringing the first news of the fighting on the Shipka. He was then presented to the Tsar, who complimented him and awarded him the Order of St. Stanilaus for bravery. Answering the Tsar's questions on his military service, Forbes proudly stated that he had been a private trooper in the cavalry of the line. He witnessed most of the principal operations and was continuously in the field until, after the Russians' September attack on Plevna, he succumbed to malarial fever, was invalided back to Bucharest and was delirious for seven days, but survived. His reporting was an outstanding success and confirmed his reputation. His status was shown by the banquet given in London in his honour in December 1877 and attended by leading journalists, distinguished soldiers, the Duke of Sutherland and other aristocrats: and at the Press Fund dinner in May 1878 he was among the honoured guests.<sup>45</sup>

In July and August 1879 Forbes reported the British occupation of Cyprus and exposed the sickness and mortality of the British garrison. Later in 1878 Robinson sent him to India for the Afghan War. In the winter he accompanied Browne's Khyber Pass force into Afghanistan to Jalabad, witnessed the capture of Ali Musjid, marched with several expeditions against the hill tribes and, for helping the wounded under fire, was mentioned in despatches. He was selective in his criticism, identifying with the force he

accompanied. The Khyber force had inadequate numbers, transport and medical equipment but, as Repington later wrote, "Though we had with us up the Khaibar Archibald Forbes, the great war correspondent, nothing of this came out".<sup>46</sup> Early in 1879 Forbes visited Burma and at Mandalay interviewed King Thibaw.

In 1879 Robinson sent him to report the Zulu War. He arrived after Isandhlwana, criticised Chelmsford's strategy, reported the scene at Isandhlwana four months after the battle, the finding of the Prince Imperial's body, and the advance on Ulundi. He witnessed the battle of Ulundi and immediately wrote a vivid succinct account of it, praising both sides' bravery: "The Zulus dashed with great bravery into close quarters amidst the deadly hail of Martini bullets and the volleys of cannister, and stubbornly assailed us on all four faces of our square, which stood like a rock". He described the British cavalry's charge: "the Lancers and Buller's Horsemen...burst like a torrent upon the broken enemy...the British cavalry effectually vindicated its reputation". He concluded that, "The success of the day is unquestionable".<sup>47</sup> Chelmsford decided against sending despatch riders that evening, but Forbes rode alone through hostile territory, 120 miles in fifteen hours, to the telegraph station at Landman's Drift. His telegram was the first news of the battle received in Britain, and was read by ministers in both Houses of Parliament. By this "ride of death" Forbes achieved his greatest fame. The press eulogised him. The Illustrated London News printed on its front page a full-page dramatic picture

by Caton Woodville of him galloping through the bush, and proposed that he be awarded the V.C., or at least the C.M.G.<sup>48</sup> Peter Clayden described his ride as, "one of the most striking efforts of energy and endurance in modern times".<sup>49</sup> However, this was his last campaign. He had overstrained himself by excessive hardship and exertion: as he wrote, "My personal experience is that ten years of toil, exposure, hardship, anxiety and brain-strain, such as the electric fashion of modern war correspondence exacts, suffice to impair the hardiest organization".<sup>50</sup>

From then on he exploited his earlier experiences, studies and writings. Following Russell's precedent, since the Franco-Prussian War he had lectured intermittently on his war experiences - often to packed audiences, though once only one man came<sup>51</sup> - and from 1880 to 1882 he lectured in Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Public lectures were lucrative for Victorian celebrities, and he allegedly gained twelve thousand pounds from his Australian tour.<sup>52</sup> The Times stated, "He was a good lecturer, though not a remarkable one; his fine military figure and the adventures which he had passed through counted for more with popular audiences than any amount of polish and refinement of style".<sup>53</sup> He lectured in evening dress and decorations, "across his evening-dress coat, in a double row, no fewer than fourteen medals or crosses, including the Iron Cross of Prussia".<sup>54</sup> He used his honorary doctorate on the title page of his later books. He valued medals and decorations and resented not being awarded them by the British authorities. He applied for the Afghan and Zulu

war medals. As Russell, only an observer, had been awarded Crimea and Mutiny medals, Forbes, who had been mentioned in despatches for helping the wounded in action in the Afghan War and who had carried official messages in the Zulu War, had a strong case. However, he met lies and obstruction from War Office officials and finally, through an influential friend, learned that Childers had decided that, "civilians who attach themselves to an army ought not to be deemed eligible for war medals".<sup>55</sup> He later described the episode in his acrimonious article, 'My Campaign in Pall Mall'.

Visiting the United States, Forbes met and married in 1882 Catherine, daughter of General Montgomery Cunningham Meigs, Quartermaster-General of the United States Army from 1861 to 1882, a distinguished engineer and administrator who constructed major public works and during the Civil War had a crucial task supervising the procurement, supply and transport of the federal army: William H. Seward claimed that, "without the services of this eminent soldier the national cause must have been lost or deeply imperilled".<sup>56</sup> From him Forbes could learn of the Civil War and of industry and logistics in mass warfare. However Forbes was by then a confirmed Prussocentric continentalist and, like most of his compatriots, he insufficiently heeded the lessons of the Civil War. Forbes wrote miscellaneous journalism - 'sketches', short stories and articles on his experiences and famous persons he had met or seen - and "recast his correspondence into innumerable books".<sup>57</sup> He repeatedly used his material, cannibalising his novel for stories and sketches and reprinting the same pieces in a succession of

books. He also, from his days as a dragoon private through into the 'nineties, contributed articles on military and related subjects, some controversial - including some defending the role and integrity of war correspondents - to the serious reviews, and these were among his best work. He contributed The Great War of 189-(1892) and to Battles of the Nineteenth Century (1896),<sup>58</sup> and wrote five derivative biographies of famous military men. He never wrote an autobiography, but published several autobiographical articles.

Journalists were useful to those wanting favourable publicity, and a small minority of journalists, including Escott and Sala, were accepted into 'Society'. Members of the royal family wanting a good press cultivated journalistic contacts and this facilitated some journalists' social acceptance. Others, however, though well-known and believed influential, remained unacceptable, such as Stead. War correspondence could lead to social elevation, as with Russell and Villiers. However, like Melton Prior, Forbes did not receive any British honours and was not accepted by 'Society' or favoured by royalty, despite being Scottish, the most famous war correspondent after Russell, and writing adulatorily about royalty. His lack of social elevation probably resulted from both personal and political factors. Whereas Russell charmed and amused, Forbes' arrogant, truculent and sometimes bad-tempered personality grated and offended. Russell was Conservative in politics: Forbes worked for the Gladstonian, atrocitarian and anti-Disraeli Daily News when the court was 'jingo' and the Queen loathed Gladstone. Russell had criticised bungling in the Crimea

and the Queen, concerned about her soldiers, had valued this. However Forbes, writing on the Zulu War, criticised Chelmsford who continued a royal favourite awarded a succession of honours including Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order. Forbes, in contrast, was refused even the Zulu War medal. He resented his lack of honours, blaming politicians rather than royalty. He wrote to J.R. Robinson that, "the Liberal party was far too remiss in rewarding those who were steadfastly loyal and faithful to its cause".<sup>59</sup> Some attempted to use success as a war correspondent to become an M.P.: for example, Russell, Charles Williams and later Winston Churchill. Forbes did not. He regarded himself primarily as a journalist and long continued busy with journalism and lectures. No politician, by chance he had worked for Liberal papers, the Morning Star and the Daily News, and his contacts were largely with Liberals, yet in the 'eighties and 'nineties he diverged from Liberal Party values and expressed more those of the 'New' Right. He did not attempt to establish himself as a country gentleman: his income was insufficient and he preferred London, the centre of journalism and publishing. Moreover in his latter years he was limited by the decline of his health: in 1892 he described himself as, "an invalid in quest of health...reduced to dodder about a mineral spring".<sup>60</sup> His final years were of painful illness. When Robinson visited him in March 1900 he found him delirious, shouting, "Those guns, man: don't you see those guns? I tell you the brave fellows will be mowed down like grass".<sup>61</sup> He died a few days later.



His war correspondence achieved extensive circulation. It was reprinted in the Illustrated London News and other weeklies and, sometimes by agreement but sometimes plagiarised, in the provincial press. The Daily News claimed its Russo-Turkish War correspondence was, "more widely reproduced than any communication ever despatched from the fields of battle".<sup>62</sup> Exploiting the popularity by its war correspondence the Daily News reprinted it in book form, on both the Franco-Prussian and Russo-Turkish wars. The Daily News reports were also used by the Annual Register and it quoted Forbes.<sup>63</sup> His war correspondence impressed contemporaries. He was quoted and cited in other papers, in parliament and in election speeches. From his descriptions of the Zulu war orators drew quotations to denounce Disraeli's policy and sometimes war itself, notably during the 1880 election campaign. Joseph Arch, for example, contesting the rural constituency of Wilton, in a speech condemning the Zulu War quoted Forbes,

"In the Daily News, some weeks ago, I read a statement which made my blood almost boil in my veins. It was a letter from their special correspondent, and had reference to the unhappy affair at Isandula, a spot visited four months after the unfortunate offray. He says: 'A strange dead calm reigned in this solitude of nature; grain had grown luxuriantly around the waggons...in soil fertilized by the life-blood of gallant men. So long the grass in most places had grown that it mercifully shrouded the dead, whom for four long months we had left

unburied'. And who were the unfortunate men whose bones were left there bleaching in the intense heat of an African sun? They were chiefly the sons of agricultural labourers. And what thought for the mother whose son had been engaged in that sad conflict - the thought that the child whom she in pain bore and in anguish brought forth, whom she nourished in his boyhood, and hoped to have seen grown up to have formed and have played some significant and useful part in the body politic, had lain weltering in his own life-blood on an alien shore, and his body had been open to the penetrating sun four months".<sup>64</sup>

His war correspondence was long remembered. As The Times obituary stated, "Even after an interval of 30 years, his accounts of the battles round Metz are remembered as among the most vivid records of those tremendous days".<sup>65</sup> In 1922 in his memoirs St. Loe Strachey described his father reading to him from the Daily News "Forbes's vivid account" of the battle of Sadowa.<sup>66</sup> In fact it was not by Forbes but by Hilary Skinner, who when Forbes began reporting had been the leading Daily News war correspondent ranking with Russell as the élite of the profession and later praised by Forbes as "brilliant and versatile". Similarly in the Franco-Prussian War Forbes received credit for the Daily News' brilliant description of Bazaine's surrender at Metz, in fact by an unknown American, Müller,<sup>67</sup> and later the I.L.N. obituary credited him with being, "the first to

recognise the importance of the telegraph in war correspondence". The attribution of others' deeds and sayings to the famous is a process familiar in history and mythology. It was indicative of Forbes' reputation that, having gained fame as a war correspondent, outstanding war reporting, then still anonymous, even though by others was attributed to him.

His achievement as a war correspondent gave credibility to his further articles on military topics in the serious reviews and in his books, by which he reached a partially different readership. His influence can only be conjectured but as a leading journalist writing on war and the army, though the quality of his contributions was inferior to those of such experts as G.S. Clarke or Spenser Wilkinson, he helped shape Victorian civilians' perception of war and military issues.

1. THE CAREER OF ARCHIBALD FORBES: NOTES

1. Thomas 173. My account of Forbes is partly from his writings; Times, ILN, Annual Register obituaries; DNB. Villiers; Thomas; William Johnston, Roll of the Graduates of the University of Aberdeen (1906); Bullard. My chapter concentrates on his military writings and message, never previously studied as a whole.
2. Bullard 79; Joseph Hatton, Journalistic London (1882) 58.
3. Thomas 173. His portrait by Herkomer was exhibited at the Academy in 1882, AJ('82) 238.
4. Rp A. Forbes, Memories and Studies of War and Peace (1895).
5. A. Forbes, 'How I became a War Correspondent' in Souvenirs of Some Continents (1885) 48.
6. Bullard 74.
7. On the R. Dragoons C.P. De Ainslie, Historical Record of the First or Royal Regiment of Dragoons (1887) 196-208; C.T. Atkins, History of the Royal Dragoons 166-1934 (nd) 335-8.
- 8-9. Souvenirs 49.
10. On M. Star largely from Justin McCarthy, The Story of an Irishman (1904) 117-28.
11. Mathews 106, 113.
12. Brown, 'Treatment' 23-39.
13. An. Register (1870, 1871); Forbes, Experiences I 389, 434, 447; Thomas 179; A. Horne, The Fall of Paris (1965) 248-9; J.O. Greenwood, Quaker Encounters. Vol.1 Friends and Relief (1975) 47-79.
14. Memories 222. Cf Experiences I 118.
15. Mowbray Morris, Times manager, claimed he did not know of Forbes' offer, J.B. Atkins II 219.
16. On Robinson and D.N. largely from Thomas, Brown.
17. Mathews 120-2. London was the headquarters for American reporting of Europe, Hatton 249. On inter-paper news-sharing v Brown, News 115-6.
18. Memories 223-4.
19. Rp Memories. His fullest account of his Franco-Prussian War reporting was My Experiences of the War between France and Germany (1871), written from his Morning Advertiser and Daily News reports but omitting some information later included in articles and Memories.

20. The History of The Times: The Tradition Established 1841-1884 (1939) 429.
21. Forbes to Russell 13 July '99 quo Atkins 220.
22. Bullard 85.
23. Memories 10-11.
24. Quo Atkins II 216.
25. Brown, 'Treatment' 33.
26. Brown, Victorian News 60, 97.
27. Brown, 'Treatment' 33. On circulation figures v Brown, News 3,26,51-2. Readership exceeded sales figures as papers were much circulated after original sale: lent, hired or passed on, ib 27-9, 50.
28. Anthony Smith, The Newspaper (1979) 154.
29. Hatton 103; Thomas 373, 167.
30. Thomas 376.
31. Forbes, Memories 46, 30
- 32-3. Thomas 171.
34. Forbes, Memories 225.
35. Quo Thomas 176.
36. Villiers, Personalities 243-4.
37. Thomas 171.
38. DNB.
39. Villiers, Pictures 4-5; Personalities 243-58; Villiers I 15-31.
40. Furniss 132-3.
41. Brown, 'Treatment' 33.
42. J. Arch, Joseph Arch: The Story of his Life (1898, 1986 ed) 83.
43. Forbes, Souvenirs 141.
44. Villiers, Villiers I 20.
45. Hatton 167-70, 176.
46. Repington, Vestigia 51.
47. Daily News rp ILN LXXV (26 July'79)78. Forbes later described the battle in Memories 42-4.

48. ILN LXXV (9 Aug '79) 126.
49. P.W. Clayden, England under Lord Beaconsfield (1891) 343.
50. Forbes, Memories 46.
51. Villiers, Personalities 256.
52. G.A. Sala, The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala (1895) II 413.
53. Obit. Times (31 Mar 1900) 12.
54. Thomas 174.
55. Forbes, 'My Campaign in Pall Mall', Barracks 328.
56. Quo D.Am.B. XII 507.
57. Times loc. cit.
58. P. Colomb et al, The Great War of 189- (1892); A Forbes, G.A. Henty et al, Battles of the Nineteenth Century (1896) 2 vols.
59. Thomas 365.
60. Forbes, Memories 297.
61. Thomas 172.
62. The War Correspondence of the "Daily News" 1877 (2nd ed. 1877) Preface. On provincial press copying from the London press v Brown, News 122-3, 241.
63. e.g. An.Register 1879 on the Zulu War; H.J. Hanham, Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone (1959) 223.
64. Arch (1966 ed) 119. The report Arch quoted was reprinted in ILN LXXIV (12 July '79) 37-8, and later used by Forbes in 'A War Correspondent's Reminiscences', Nineteenth C. XXX (Aug '91) reprinted as 'Ten Years of War Correspondence' in Memories. Cf John Arden, Serjeant Musgrave's Dance (1959).
65. Times loc. cit.
66. John St. Loe Strachey, The Adventure of Living (1922) 86-7.
67. Memories 223-4; Thomas 176. Robinson continued to favour anonymity in journalism, ib 222.

## 2. 'A PRIVATE DRAGOON': FORBES' FIRST JOURNALISM

While serving in the Dragoons Forbes began his journalism by contributing articles on military subjects to periodicals. Newspapers then contained mainly news with few 'features' and were apparently intended to complement the serious quarterly and monthly periodicals, the main organs of ideas and comment: prestigious, influential and selling extensively.<sup>1</sup> The periodical press expanded, and among the new publications was George Smith's Cornhill Magazine, launched in 1860. In the later sixties public interest in the army revived with the Austro-Prussian War, the Abyssinian campaign and the demand for military reforms including the abolition of purchase and of flogging. Rankers seldom stated their views in print,<sup>2</sup> but in 1864 the Cornhill published Forbes' anonymous article 'The Limited Enlistment Act' which he claimed stated the views common among the rank and file.<sup>3</sup> He stated that too few enlisted, as civilian wages were higher, civilians feared army discipline, especially flogging, and "the fillip which war gives to the hot blood of youth is wanting"(209). Soldiers did not re-enlist, because of pay, conditions, inability to marry, excessive drill, and N.C.O.s' tyranny. He emphasised the harm to morale of injustice, a recurring theme. He opposed short service because of veterans' superior quality, and advocated long service, another recurring theme, and better pay and conditions. He thus stated grievances which continued throughout the century, and demanded reforms which army reformers continued to demand.<sup>4</sup> In rejecting short service he failed to consider a reserve

for major war: his military thinking was not yet dominated by Germany. His 1860s army articles presented information and ideas new to many middle-class readers.

Another new periodical, Saint Pauls, published in 1868 his 'The Private Soldier as he is. By a Dragoon on Furlough',<sup>5</sup> again stating rankers' conditions and grievances, including that most could not marry: the condition of soldiers' wives, "insults womanhood"(103). The soldier was still a "social pariah"(ib) and bitterly resented it. Forbes, an atypical soldier because middle-class, presented army life as the negation of the middle-class ideal of family, independence and respectability. Men from the slums responded differently: Joseph Williamson never had an overcoat until he enlisted and,"thought army life was wonderful".<sup>6</sup> In 1869 Saint Pauls published Forbes' 'Christmas in a Cavalry Regiment', a sympathetic portrayal of rankers.<sup>7</sup> Victorians loved Christmas and Forbes, an opportunist journalist, repeatedly wrote articles on Christmas themes.<sup>8</sup>

In 1869, with renewed public concerns with army reform, Saint Pauls published Forbes' 'Army Reform, by a Private Dragoon',<sup>9</sup> arguing for the status quo against the middle-class meritocratic transformation of the army demanded by Sir Charles Trevelyan, then well-known as the author of the Trevelyan-Northcote report and as an advocate of army reform. Forbes again claimed to express ranker opinion. He claimed that "the dregs" made good soldiers whereas middle-class men often did not, that the existing system was cheap and used men useless elsewhere, and that rankers, "arrant snobs",



would resent 'mushroom' parvenu officers. Forbes' argument on the soldiers' adequacy was, with most soldiers' functions pretechnical, probably valid, but the reformers' quest for the better class of recruit continued. Whether better educated men made better soldiers was to be discussed again during and after the Boer War, when the British were repeatedly outfought by men they believed backward.<sup>10</sup> Forbes had the independence to challenge the ascendant reformers and their doctrine that more middle-class and more educated necessarily meant better.<sup>11</sup>

A recurring topic in Forbes' writings was soldiers' wives, a controversial issue.<sup>12</sup> Official policy was that most rankers be unmarried, a continuing rankers' grievance: W.E. Cairnes noted that, "the question of permission to marry is a burning one in the barrack room".<sup>13</sup> However apologists of the status quo emphasised its benefits to army wives.<sup>14</sup> In 1870 he published in Saint Pauls as 'a Private Dragoon' his article 'Soldiers' Wives'.<sup>15</sup> He criticised the married quarters' overcrowding and lack of privacy, the wives' irreligion and chaplains' neglect of them, and he emphasised the hardships of wives not on the strength. As often, he generalised from inadequate data. His claim that a considerable number of soldiers married prostitutes was probably exaggerated, and this was not permitted in such regiments as the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.<sup>16</sup> He also omitted the problem of venereal disease.<sup>17</sup> His writings contributed to public awareness of army wives, though Kipling most changed attitudes towards the rank and file and their families. Forbes' portrayal of army life was largely

harsh and unromanticised, and increased middle-class awareness of rankers' lives and army reform issues. His articles attracted some notice and controversy and helped his career: they predisposed Robinson in 1870 to hire him as a war correspondent.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. 'A PRIVATE DRAGOON': NOTES

1. Walter E. Houghton, 'Victorian Periodical Literature and the Articulate Classes', Vic.Stud. XXII (1979); Brown, Victorian News 107-9. See also The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals.
2. Cf Anon (F. Greenwood). 'Life in a Barrack', Cornhill Mag. (April '63); 'Staff-Sergeant, 'Why the Army is Unpopular', S. Pauls (Dec 70); 'How to make the Army Popular', ib (Jan '71); 'Hints to Army Reformers' (Feb '71). Their message was largely similar to Forbes', though 'Staff-Sergeant' also advocated conscription.
3. 'The Limited Enlistment Act', S. Pauls (Aug '64).
4. Cf C.W. Dilke, The British Army (1888) 361-2, on grievances rankers told Dilke. Recent research has confirmed Forbes' account, see Skelley, Spiers.
5. 'The Private Soldier as he is', S. Pauls (April '68).
6. Joseph Williams, Father Joe (1965) 42,75. Cf John Cusack, Scarlet Fever (1972) 14-16.
7. 'Christmas in a Cavalry Regiment', S. Pauls (Jan '69).
8. e.g. 'Christmas Day on a "growler"', rp Glimpses; 'Work-house Christmas Depravity', rp Soldiering; 'A Christmas Dinner de Profundis', rp Barracks.
9. 'Army Reform', S. Pauls (April '69).
10. e.g. H.G. Wells, 'The Land Ironclads', Strand Mag. (Dec 1903). On Wells' military thinking see R.T. Stearn, 'Wells and War', Wellsian VI NS (1983).

11. Trevelyan replied in 'Army Reform', S. Pauls (May '69) patronising Forbes' article and mostly not answering Forbes' case but repeating his own. The Wellesley Index has attributed 'On officering the British Army', S. Pauls (Oct '70) "perhaps" to Forbes, but internal evidence suggests it was not by him.
12. See Skelley; Spiers; Frank Richards, Old Soldier Sahib (1936, '65) 161.
13. A British Officer (W.E. Cairnes), Social Life in the British Army (1900) 102.
14. e.g. Cicely McDonnell, 'The Advantages of Marrying a Soldier', Navy & Army Illustrated V (1898) 102.
15. 'Soldiers' Wives', S. Pauls (April '70). Reprinted with a footnote on the change under Cardwell, in Soldiering (1872). Revised version, omitting irreligion section and emphasising improvements since 1870, in Memories (1895).
16. Richards 161.
17. Skelley 25,54; Spiers 162. See also R. Kipling, Something of Myself (1937) 56; J.R. & J.D. Walkowitz, 'Prostitution and the Poor in Plymouth and Southampton under the Contagious Diseases Acts', Feminist Studies (1973); Judith R. Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society (1980)
18. Thomas 168-9.

### 3. THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

Forbes' reporting of the Franco-Prussian War established his reputation and he was quick to exploit his new celebrity to publish signed articles. In 1870, while still with the Prussian army in France, he wrote an article, published under his name in the December Saint Pauls, 'The Victorious Prussians',<sup>1</sup> briefly analysing causes of Prussian victory. He was, "essentially a private soldier, although I no longer wear the Queen's uniform"(p282), and had been much with the Prussian troops at the front. He praised the Prussian military system and its, "furnishing an almost inexhaustible supply of soldiers"(p283). The reserves were trained, and superior to the British Militia. The Prussian army, drawn from all classes, was unlike any other. He praised the soldiers' interconnected moral and physical qualities, emphasising patriotism and individual responsibility: "where every man is a soldier, no man is a mere mercenary"(p286). Because of their sobriety they were fitter and marched better than British troops. Individual courage, or cowardice, was less important than usually supposed: "discipline and companionship will force a weak-kneed coward through an action without disgracing himself"(p288). Prussian enthusiasm and refusal to admit defeat gave them a "formidability" against which French impetuosity failed. He noted that in recent wars, "there has been less and yet less actual bayonet fighting, owing to the increasing efficiency and deadliness of arms of precision"(p289). The Prussians admitted the superiority of the chassepot yet they attacked and "the Prussian nerve neutralised the superiority of the chasse-

pot"(290). The Prussian fired steadily and effectively from the shoulder: the French excitedly "blazed into space" from the hip. Forbes stated it was, "not my business to venture on military criticism"(290) but did so nevertheless, praising Prussian strategy and generalship, except that of General Steinmetz, which he discussed critically. He praised Prussian vigilance, cavalry scouting and sudden attacks. He condemned French troops' inferiority, and agreed with Chesney, "that the reputed military superiority of the French has been a myth for years"(291). The French army had no recent test: "Successes in Algeria are nothing as evidence to cope with a great military power"(292). The French army was weakened against the Germans by retaining of large forces in the major towns to suppress opposition to the regime. Under the second empire drunkenness immensely increased, especially in the army, and drink ruined discipline. The officers were, "too often ignorant, reckless, lustful and votaries of absinthe"(293), and they harmed discipline by their "itch for personal popularity with the rank and file"(ib). He concluded that Britain, "as a military nation", should draw lessons from the war, but did not there specify them.

Forbes' article was competent, clear and forceful. It marked the beginning of his writing in the reviews as a military commentator, rather than as previously a soldier writing primarily from his own experience, and it had the qualities and limitations which characterised his oeuvre. It was informed, dogmatic, condemnatory and in places generalised from inadequate data, and bellicist. It asserted Forbes as witness and expert. His reference to

his service as a private soldier was typical: he repeatedly stated it, even to the Tsar.<sup>2</sup> Before and at the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War British opinion largely favoured the Germans, then during the war became more sympathetic to the French.<sup>3</sup> Forbes, however, continued a sympathetic admirer of the Germans. His eulogy of German education and moral qualities and condemnation of French vices in part expressed the Scottish puritanism of his manse upbringing. He stated what he believed the crucial military qualities: patriotism, responsibility, sobriety, endurance, unit cohesion and steadiness rather than individual heroism or dash. While not explicitly raising the issue of conscription in Britain, he praised German conscription and implied its superiority to the British system. Like Russell, whose experience also was primarily of great-power war, Forbes was continentalist in his military thinking: in his eulogy of the German military system, his assertion that Britain should learn from the Franco-Prussian War, and his dismissal of colonial campaign experience.<sup>4</sup> The Franco-Prussian War was apparently the formative experience of Forbes' military thinking, and he continued his Prusso-centric continentalism throughout his military writings. The German army remained his exemplar and the standard against which he assessed the British army, and he became a leading populariser of continentalist military doctrine. He rightly noted the decline in importance in battle of the bayonet but, in Britain as on the continent, the military authorities continued to emphasise it. Writing largely from his own limited experience of the war and so impressed by Prussian virtues and success against the French armed

with the superior chassepot, he ignored German numerical superiority and understated matériel factors in German victory: railways and artillery. Emphasising Prussian "nerve" he ignored the artillery's neutralising the chassepots' superiority by breaking up French infantry attacks beyond the chassepots' effective range.<sup>5</sup> While always believing soldiers' fighting qualities crucial, in his military writings he fluctuated in his assessment of the relative importance of firepower. In the Franco-Prussian War he tended to minimise it, the Russo-Turkish War caused him to emphasise it, then later he again emphasised fighting qualities rather than firepower as crucial to victory.

In his later years Forbes frequently cited the Franco-Prussian War, and wrote more articles and stories on it than on any other war.<sup>6</sup> These reinforced the message of his earlier writing, his role as correspondent, his adventures, dangers and military expertise. He condemned the Second Empire as meretricious and immoral.<sup>7</sup> He was vague on the horrors of war<sup>8</sup> but, in sad and sentimental tales, emphasised its sorrow, the effects on the bereaved.<sup>9</sup> He did not question war itself or allege its futility. He emphasised the scale of continental war and its casualties, German military qualities, and the qualities necessary for victory. Patriotism and self-sacrificing courage were insufficient, planning and preparedness were crucial. He again portrayed war as noble and glorious, and eulogised the military virtues and the noble death in battle. He wrote of Bazaine, "Ah! why did heaven deny him then a straight thrust from the beautiful 'white weapon' to give him the good death a man

so soldierly had surely earned".<sup>10</sup> His perception of the Franco-Prussian War continued fundamental to his continentalist military thinking. His message to his compatriots was often not explicit, yet implicit in his writings on the Franco-Prussian War was his message of fitness for war.

### 3. FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR: NOTES

1. 'The Victorious Prussians', S. Pauls (Dec '70). Forbes' Franco-Prussian War reporting is not here fully considered (his Russo-Turkish War reporting is taken as the main sample of his war correspondence), but rather his message on the war and the war's effect on his military thinking. For his Franco-Prussian War correspondence see My Experiences of the War between France and Germany (1871) 2 vols; for his later evaluation, William of Germany (1888). See also Michael Howard, The Franco-Prussian War (1961).
2. Memories 34.
3. Annual Register 1870 93; Paul Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914 (1980) 23, 63, 81, 92-3. Carlyle was a notable exception, e.g. letter to The Times (11 Nov '70) re Thomas Carlyle, Critical and Miscellaneous Essays (1903) III 242.
4. On continentalism see 'Military Controversies II' section.
5. B.H. Liddell Hart, 'Armed forces and the art of war-Armies', NCMH X (1960) 306.
6. e.g. 'Moltke and Moltkeism', Nineteenth C. (Dec '91); 'Napoleon the Third at Sedan', ib (Mar '92); 'Soldiers I Have Known', Memories.
7. e.g. Souvenirs 70-2; Memories 66.
8. e.g. Memories 69. He had been more explicit in his reporting, e.g. Experiences I 142, 249. In 'The Crushing of the Commune', Memories he emphasised the horrors of reprisals, executions and massed corpses, but was inexplicit.
9. e.g. Memories 113-4, 310; 'Matrimony under Fire', Camps 1-12.
10. Souvenirs 95; cf Memories 303. Cf Wolseley's desire to die in battle, and The Light that Failed.



#### 4. THE RUSSO-TURKISH WAR

In 1876 Forbes reported the Serbo-Turkish War, and there met the Graphic's young special artist, Frederick Villiers, whose attitude indicated the reputation Forbes had attained in the Franco-Prussian War: "the hero I had worshipped since a boy, to me the central figure of Sedan, Gravelotte and Le Bourget".<sup>1</sup> The Serbo-Turkish War aroused little interest in Britain.<sup>2</sup> However the Russo-Turkish War which followed in 1877 aroused great interest and emotion. The Daily News had publicised Pears' and MacGahan's reports on Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria, which led to the atrocitarian agitation.<sup>3</sup> Most Liberals loathed the Turks and wanted their defeat. Conservatives were divided, with Disraeli and other imperialists alarmed at the Russian threat to Constantinople and the route to India. Jingoism rose. Soldiers and other defence-minded men were concerned with the lessons of the war, and especially the siege of Plevna and the effect of repeating rifles on battle. As during the Franco-Prussian War, newspaper circulations increased and new papers were started.<sup>4</sup>

In the summer of 1877 some eighty correspondents of various nationalities, the British the largest group, accompanied the Russian forces.<sup>5</sup> The Russian authorities imposed minimal control and censorship. They issued correspondents with passes and brassards. The Daily News sent Forbes, MacGahan - whom Forbes later called, "the most brilliant correspondent I have ever known"<sup>6</sup> - and other experienced correspondents, and later recruited young

Americans who during the Franco-Prussian War had helped introduce American methods and speed to British journalism.<sup>7</sup> As in the Franco-Prussian War, Robinson spent lavishly to optimise the Daily News' coverage, on horses, wagons, servants, couriers, presents, bribes and telegrams. Forbes wrote that, "The purely telegraphic charges were enormous, for almost everything was telegraphed. But there was no stinting".<sup>8</sup> The Daily News team and its communications were well organised, with a courier service to Bucharest. They were also, largely because of the Daily News anti-Turkish policy, favoured by the Russian military and had much helpful contact with Russian generals. As Forbes wrote, "General Ignatieff was very kind in giving me hints as to impending events".<sup>9</sup> Following a tip he was one of two correspondents who saw the beginning of the Russian assault on Plevna. He usually travelled with his polyglot Serbian servant and translator Andreas, and with Villiers.<sup>10</sup>

The Russo-Turkish War further increased the reputation of Forbes and of the Daily News, though it failed to overtake the Telegraph's circulation lead. As in the Franco-Prussian War, the Daily News war correspondence excelled its rivals' in earlier arrival and quality, and was extensively reproduced in other papers.<sup>11</sup> Forbes' reports were typical of his war correspondence.<sup>12</sup> They were written when he was an experienced correspondent, still at the height of his powers, and in them he displayed the traits which characterised his writings and which their success showed were acceptable to a wide public. They were written in the first person and often personal. He described his own experiences: his meetings with the great, his problems, dangers and hardships,

and his long rides to ensure transmission of his reports. He described his wagon, equipment, horses and servants. He described how alone, ahead of the advancing Russians, he rode into a Bulgarian town and was welcomed when he told the townspeople he was a correspondent of the Daily News. He described his anxiety when Villiers was missing and possibly killed by the Turks. He emphasised that he himself witnessed events, claiming, "I am not fond of accepting hearsay evidence"(286). He emphasised also his own danger at the front line or beyond it and under fire. He reported that he had ridden between the Russian and Turkish lines under fire from both and then ridden to the Russian line and been briefly held prisoner. He reported that before Plevna he accompanied Russian infantry on an attack and was then with the Russian artillery, under fire: "Men were dropping fast around me in the battery already, for the position of the guns was greatly exposed" (311). He wrote, "amid the groaning of the wounded and the whistling of shells"(373). He described his thirty mile ride armed with a revolver and defying the danger of Bashi Bazouks; his ride of over three hundred miles in six days, never taking his clothes off; and his exhaustion following his exertions.

Proud of being a war correspondent, he included observations and opinions on them. He emphasised his ensuring his communications back to his newspaper, sometimes by his own epic rides: "A correspondent without means of communication is a contradiction in terms"(225). He denied allegations in the British press that the correspondents with the Russian forces were not independent of the Russian authorities. The authorities, whose press policy and treat-

ment of the correspondents he praised, allowed them to write as they wished, even criticism, but not to write prematurely of impending events: "that stipulation which does not require to be inculcated on a war correspondent who realises his responsibilities"(p228). He praised the "manly candour of the Russian military authorities" in publishing his report of the Russian failure against Plevna. He asserted that as a war correspondent he, "never submitted to the sacrifice of my independence"(ib). After other British papers published reports differing from his, he asserted his accuracy: "never in my experience have sensational telegrams availed to alter facts"(p427). His report on the unsuccessful Russian August attack on Plevna was "plainspoken" and "strove to tell the truth without fear or favour". He emphasised his military judgment, stating his forecast of the failure of the Russian attack on Plevna was proved correct.

He stated some of the problems of war reporting. The correspondent, because he had only limited access to information and especially because he could be in only one place at a time, had difficulty in forming a balanced, undistorted overall picture. He wrote that, "a person belonging to or accompanying any part of an army, save its principal headquarters, knows rather less of the doings of that army as a whole...than...any community in Europe who care to read"(p157)<sup>13</sup>. The correspondent had to try to select that sector which was "making history". Before Plevna he noted that action was on so extensive a front that the correspondent could not see the entire battle, and had to choose the place likely to be most interesting. He noted the limitations inherent in the

immediacy of battle-reporting: "I have to record the events of today, the results of which it is not possible dispassionately to estimate with the din of battle still ringing in one's ears"(467).

Forbes believed himself a military expert, and that it was his function not only to report war but to comment, analyse and criticise. He was patriotic and when with the British forces identified with them. In the Russo-Turkish War he favoured the Russian but in reporting he was objective and, while willing to report faults on either side, did not vilify the enemy - unlike, later, the much-praised G.W. Steevens. Forbes criticised what he believed were faults, and named those he believed were to blame. He only incidentally in passing comparisons, mentioned the British army, usually critically: though, as his other writings showed he was loyal to it. He referred to the Dartmoor manoeuvres, "which were mainly memorable for the vacillation of Sir Charles Staveley"(51). He praised the practicality of the Russian accoutrements, in contrast to the British.<sup>14</sup> Remembering his own experience, he noted of the Russian soldier, "His belts are black leather, so he escapes being a chronic victim to pipeclay"(46). He stated, "Everywhere the British scarlet is more conspicuous than any other. The true fighting colour is the dingy kharki of our Indian irregulars"(197). Here he differed from British army orthodoxy led by Cambridge and agreed with Wolseley and other military progressives who wanted less conspicuous uniforms and were to obtain in the 'eighties the experimental use though not the adoption of grey uniforms.<sup>15</sup> However he

was not a Wolseleyite. He contrasted Russian impartiality towards units with Wolseley's favouritism: "It is not with them always 'The 42nd to the front' as was the standing order in Ashantee"(215).

Despite his liking for the Russians and their friendliness to him, he criticised their faults. He praised their medical service, but noted that in the heavy rain their soldiers were without tents. He criticised their inefficiency, compared to the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War, in defence: the lack of adequate patrols and sentries, so that the Turks could have made a successful surprise attack. Despite its qualities, the Russian army, "has much to learn even of the rudiments of the art military...a surprising slackness seems to pervade the army in regard to the everyday duties of modern warfare"(216). He criticised them for cutting enemy telegraph wires rather than, as the Americans had in the Civil War, tapping them. At Simnitsa in early July he criticised their delay, largely blaming, "the pottering rearrangements of commanders in order that young gentlemen of the blood imperial may gain military fame and St. George's Crosses"(246). Before Plevna at the beginning of August he criticised their attack claiming their planning was faulty with the two attacking forces too far apart, insufficiently co-ordinated, and too weak. He condemned the generals' rashness and errors of judgment.<sup>16</sup> Later, on the 19th August, he criticised the Russian commander's "carelessness and stupidity"(354) in failing to occupy Plevna when he had the opportunity: "a blunder the like of which can only be found in the early stages of the American

civil war when armies were commanded by lawyers, doctors, merchants and politicians"(350). He criticised the Russians for advancing without sufficient reconnaissance and flank defence: "The imbecility displayed in this by educated military men is of that kind which simply surpasses belief and defies explanation"(ib). He blamed their "carelessness, recklessness and incapacity", dispersal of forces and inadequate reconnaissance, for the failure of their attack on Plevna. He claimed that after the Crimean War the army had been unpopular and neglected, so inferior men had gained promotion to key positions.

From the years when, a young dragoon, he had read Napier and Jomini, Forbes had studied intermittently the conduct of war. In his war correspondence he stated his opinions on the lessons of the Russo-Turkish War, and the changing nature and future of war, drawing on both his reading of military history, and his experience of earlier campaigns. He claimed that, "There are rules of warfare for which experience has given warrant, and respecting which experience tells us that their disregard, in nine cases out of ten, results in disaster"(373). Like his contemporary military commentators and theorists, and in contrast to his own earlier published opinions during the Franco-Prussian War, he was obsessed by the effect of increased firepower on battle, emphasizing the discontinuity with the past. Before the attacks on Plevna, in May he stated that the Turks had previously fought well in fortified places, and that, as the Franco-Prussian War showed, rifled weapons had ended the traditional storming of fortifications. He commented that,

"Rifled arms of offence are sad foes to unscientific heroism. A maid of Saragossa is incompatible with Krupp and Armstrong as contemporaries"(53). He contrasted the past, "when a man's strong arm and stout heart went for something", with the present when war was, "a thing of cold science, and the reduction of a place...a question of mathematical calculation"(67). Later after the failure of the earlier Russian attacks on Plevna, he stated they had shown the advantage conferred by modern firearms to raw undisciplined troops fighting from trenches on the defensive, enabling them to shoot down bayonet charges by veterans: "With modern firearms, a simple mob, individually brave men, without discipline and without organization, can hold intrenchments against even the best troops in the world, as long as they are only attacked in front"(365). He claimed the solution was for the attackers also to entrench, gradually advancing, "tactically on the defensive"(361). He stated that, as the Spanish war showed, artillery was ineffective against infantry in trenches. The effectiveness of modern artillery had been exaggerated: it had a moral effect on raw troops but little material effect. Shells were smothered in soft ground and in the Franco-Prussian War the Prussian artillery had inflicted not more than five percent of the French casualties. Yet despite his emphasis on the effectiveness of the Turkish defence, he claimed the Russians would win. He also considered possible future strategies of the Russians. He was much interested in cavalry and, "an old heavy cavalry man myself"(143), particularly in heavy cavalry. He described the Russian cavalry, comparing the heavy cavalry with those of Germany and of Britain. He praised the inconspicuousness



and lack of glitter and jingle of Russian cavalry uniforms and equipment. He condemned the recent British craze for light cavalry, arguing from the Crimea and the Franco-Prussian War that in combat between cavalry, the heavier would tend to win. Later, arguing from the experience of Plevna, he claimed that increased infantry firepower, "made cavalry, as cavalry, nearly useless, except for outpost and scouting duty, and rendered bayonet and cavalry charges impossible"(367).

In the Russo-Turkish War, as in most other wars, battle occupied chronologically only a small part of the war, and this was reflected in Forbes' war correspondence, of which only a minority described battle. Forbes' response to war was to some extent ambivalent. He accepted it, not questioning the necessity or origins of that particular war or of war in general. He did not moralise nor, unlike in some of his later writings, sentimentalise. He described its faults and its attractions. He wrote sometimes in the traditional clichés of the glory of war, and he praised the military virtues. He wrote, for example, "the gunners were to earn honour and glory"(295). He condemned the Bulgarians' cowardice, which he attributed to their oppression. He praised Russian courage, claiming in August that the failed Plevna attack was "glorious for Russian soldiers"(354). He emphasised the excitement of battle; "The moment was dramatic with an intensity to which the tameness of civilian life can furnish no parallel"(413). He described the Russian shots, "making the blood tingle with the excitement of the fray" (313). His description of battle was relatively distanced, its language conventional, omitting and concealing much of

actions, emotions, agony and horror. He wrote of "cold steel", "hard fighting", "very hot fighting, sabre and bayonet both being used freely", attacking Russians "falling fast" and that, "the fell fury of battle has entered on its maddest paroxysms"(313). Yet with such traditional attitudes and language, he also realised human limitations in war. He noted in September after the unsuccessful Russian attacks and heavy losses, that the Russian troops - knowing the possibility of wounds, humiliation, torture and mutilation - were discouraged and reluctant to attack. Soldiers could not repeatedly face, "more than the fair chances of war"(489). Forbes, even if he was seldom sufficiently explicit and detailed to distress or shock his readers, emphasised the destruction, horror and suffering of war. Basically he accepted this. Early in his reporting of the War, he wrote that war was necessarily destructive: "omelettes, of course, cannot be made without the breaking of eggs"(43). He noted the high cost in lives of some operations. In June, after the failure of the Russian attempt to cross the Danube, he wrote, "The crossing of the Danube in 1827 cost 12,000 men! in 1853 it cost 15,000 men! a significant comment on the resisting capacity of the Turks"(201). He noted the risk to the troops from Danube fever and stated that in every war disease killed many more than battle, "and there is no likelihood that in this campaign there will be any respite from the inexorable law"(188). Yet while he, in effect, omitted the inflicting of wounds, he described the suffering of the wounded. His description of the wounded - in any description of battle, indicative of the writer's attitude - was limited; not concealing, but not specific and detailed, and

leaving much to the reader's experience or imagination. He described the wounded and the dead. He wrote of "shattered creatures" awaiting medical treatment, and of the dead, collected together, "swelling and blackening under the fierce heat"(p197). When the Russians retreated after an unsuccessful attack, "the wounded died like flies from fatigue and sunstroke"(p274). He reported, "the sufferings of the poor wounded, weakened by loss of blood, faint in the prostration which follows so inevitably the gunshot wound; foodless, without water, lying in the damp grass by the wayside in their blood-clotted clothes"(p321). He reported the killing of wounded by Bashi Bazouks who "butchered them in their helplessness"(ib). He described the Russians wounded after the fighting in late August in the Shipka Pass,

"The wounded came trooping steadily back with wounds in their heads, arms and bodies. Some were on litters...Some were limping along by themselves, presenting a most pitiable spectacle, covered with dust, smoke-begrimed, haggard, wretched...Besides these were the poor fellows, too severely wounded to be moved, who will probably fall into the hands of the Turks, to be murdered, tortured and mutilated"(p424-5)

As in the Franco-Prussian War, he reported that he was with the surgeons, but did not describe what he was there. He noted but did not detail Turkish atrocities. He liked the Russians, claimed they treated civilians well, repeatedly reported their hospitality and kindness to him, and stated his hope to Russian victory. He praised Russian courage in battle, especially that of Skobeleff whom he much admired,

and of the rankers. Nevertheless, following the repeated Russian failures against Plevna, by early September he had concluded the battles showed that, "The Turks are better soldiers individually than the Russians"(489). Turkish and Russian strategy were equally bad, but the Turks were better armed and were tactically superior.

Forbes' reports were of a high standard: long, clear, vivid but not hyperbolic or sensational. They were often personal but also usually dispassionate and, compared to G.W. Steevens' later excitement, relatively cool in tone. Sometimes he described in detail: for example, cossack uniforms. However he was not specific on types of weapon and their capability, probably because he knew this would be unacceptable to the Russians. He knew when to be tactful. He listed Russian units, though with only approximate numerical strength, and he discussed possible Russian strategy. He described terrain and noted that an attractive landscape appeared different to "a soldier's eye" considering how to attack across it and the probable human cost of the attack. Forbes' military comment and analysis, though not exceptional among military commentators, was competent and sometimes prescient. At Plevna he rightly saw the effect of increased infantry firepower and trenches on conventional attack by infantry or cavalry. He sometimes from his observation drew conclusions for the near future, but did not think through possible further change. At Plevna, he had the data for a Blochian analysis of the future of war, but did not so extrapolate from his observations. In the Franco-Prussian War and again at Plevna, he observed the relative ineffective-

ness of artillery against entrenched infantry yet, despite living in an age of change in military matériel, he failed to consider the possibility of more effective artillery. He wrote as a journalist primarily concerned with reporting the present, not as a military theorist or prophet. The journalist's function was to seek out and report the news as he saw it, and this Forbes - despite danger, hardship and exhaustion - did well. His reporting of the Russo-Turkish War was an impressive achievement. That it did not further consider possible future development was not a fault, but it indicated his limitations as a military thinker. The image of war he presented was essentially conventional: an activity that happened and so should be reported; important, interesting though often harsh and unpleasant with blunders, destruction, suffering, death and atrocities. At the same time implicit in his reporting was the perception of war as a challenge and an opportunity for the military qualities he so admired: initiative, courage and self-sacrifice. War is partly man's perception of it. Forbes' reporting was largely objective and realistic - if a limited, expurgated realism - with passages on the fate of the wounded that could have been used in pacifist propaganda. Yet complementing the realism and the nastiness of war, was its excitement, romance, adventure and fascination.

A journalist rather than a military thinker, Forbes was flexible and inconsistent and possibly too influenced by his latest experience or the most recent data. Plevna made a great impression on his military opinions, as also on those of some of his contemporaries. Initially what he perceived

as its lessons dominated his view of future war. However as it receded into the past and he became more influenced by the writings of continental, especially German, military experts, he modified his ideas. His priorities and emphases shifted and he came in the 'eighties and 'nineties to hold opinions on infantry and cavalry attacks different from those of 1878, For example, whereas he had observed that Russian infantry became discouraged and reluctant after repeated failures and losses, in the 'nineties he argued that British infantry should accept more casualties. In the Russo-Turkish War he had claimed that infantry firepower made cavalry ineffective against infantry, but in the 'nineties he argued, largely from the Franco-Prussian War, that cavalry could be decisive against infantry. The Russo-Turkish War was an important, though not a dominant stage in his military thinking.

Forbes returned from the Russo-Turkish War with his reputation enhanced, and published in the November 1877 Nineteenth Century 'Russian, Turks and Bulgarians: at the theatre of war'.<sup>17</sup> Asserting he was an unprejudiced observer, he claimed Russian soldiers were good military material, but because uneducated and stultified lacked ability to think and needed leading. He blamed the officers for the Russian lack of greater military success, condemning their corruption, favouritism and intrigue, and contrasting them with Germans. He condemned the Turks for their atrocities and the Bulgarians as the most repulsive people he had ever met, arrogant and extortionate. His article was outspoken and controversial, far exceeding his war correspondence in criticising the Russians: he had not there

alleged corruption. Differing from the Daily News interpretation it indicated his independence and, as he noted, was likely to be detrimental to him, as offending atrocitarians and Turcophils. His criticism of the Russians showed his belief in the importance of moral, organizational, and personnel factors in military capability. His criticism of the Turks for not using a scorched-earth policy showed the tough-mindedness which recurred through his military writings. As in his other polemical writing he omitted data not fitting his case: refuting Turkish allegations of Russian atrocities he omitted Russian "refusing quarter", though later he admitted this.<sup>18</sup>

As weapons changed, officers studied recent wars for useful lessons. The Russo-Turkish War aroused much professional interest, and in 1877 the Royal United Service Institution invited two correspondents to lecture on it: in November Forbes on the Bulgarian campaign<sup>19</sup> and in December C.B. Norman, late Times correspondent, on the Armenian campaign. That they were invited indicated their status and the belief of some professional soldiers that they could learn from correspondents. Forbes said he would confine his lecture to military matters, not political, that the only politics the soldier needed was devotion to his sovereign and duty to his country, and that as a war correspondent he had always tried to confine himself to, "the treatment of military topics, and the description of what bears upon them directly"(p1065). He described and condemned Russian strategy. He condemned the tactics of their July attack on Plevna. Their infantry advanced in

unmilitary confusion, more a mob than a swarm attack. They were brave but inexperienced, lacking fire-discipline and with too few good officers and N.C.O.s to control them, and were uselessly sacrificed. He warned that the British must learn from this: "take the word of a man who has seen much fighting both by trained and untrained soldiers"(p1082). The British army was small and "an army of boys" and, "if we would escape disaster in the hour of trial"(ib) it must retain its N.C.O.s with the colours and not reduce the number of officers: leadership was crucial. He concluded that ultimately the Russians would probably take Plevna: "In war, the weight generally tells sooner or later"(p1083). His lecture differed from his war correspondence and most of his military articles in its concentration on strategy and tactics, and showed his competence, though not exceptional originality or insight, in discussing them. He expressed doubts about the short-service army and its fire-discipline, a subject he later developed. As with the Franco-Prussian War he emphasised soldiers' fighting qualities rather than matériel, and showed what he believed the qualities necessary for war. He had not mentioned Clausewitz among the authors he had studied as a young soldier, and his statement that as a correspondent he confined himself to military topics apparently indicated a narrow un-Clausewitzian attitude to war.

The Russo-Turkish War confirmed Forbes' reputation, and his continentalism. He repeatedly drew on it for his later writings: for anecdotal and biographical sketches and, though less than the Franco-Prussian War, for more analytical and biographical sketches and, though less than the Franco-



Prussian War, for more analytical consideration of war.<sup>20</sup>

He again emphasised glory and heroism, but also Turkish war-time atrocities, "aggravations of barbarity and torture such as cannot be described".<sup>21</sup> His later articles for popular periodicals concentrated on personality and human interest, but in them he continued his message of the qualities necessary for war.

#### 4. RUSSO-TURKISH WAR: NOTES

1. Villiers, Villiers I 15.
2. Forbes, Memories 12.
3. On the Eastern Question controversy partly from P.W. Clayden, England under Lord Beaconsfield (1891) and R.T. Shannon, Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation (1963). Clayden was Daily News assistant editor, fervent Gladstonian and atrocitarian.
4. Brown, Victorian News 35, 98.
5. Mathews 142. On reporting the war partly from Mathews; Forbes, 'A War Correspondent's Reminiscences', Nineteenth C. (Aug, Sept '91) rp as chapter I, Memories; 'War Correspondence as a Fine Art', Century Mag. (Dec '92, New York), rp Memories.
- 6,7. Memories 234-5.
8. Ib 236. See Brown, 'Treatment' 37.
9. Ib 235. For an unfriendly Russian view of Forbes as a distrusted outsider see V. Verestchagin, Autobiographical Sketches (1887) II 145-6. Possibly Verestchagin resented Forbes as a rival prima donna.
10. See 'My Servants on Campaign', Memories 268-77; Mathews 252-3.
11. 'Preface', Forbes et al, The War Correspondence of the "Daily News" 1877 (1878); Mathews 145; Brown, 'Treatment' 39.

12. Forbes et al, War Correspondence; page references to this. Forbes' Russo-Turkish War correspondence is considered as a sample of his war reporting; his attitudes and style continued essentially the same throughout. For example, his reporting of the Franco-Prussian and Russo-Turkish wars was essentially similar, including his experiences, conventional battle narrative, military analysis and judgment, concern with terrain, and comparisons with the British army; and similar attitudes to and coverage of war and battle, though with the earlier war he was more explicit on the horror of battle, e.g. Experiences I 142,249: more explicit on the dead than on the wounded. He also admired the Germans more than the Russians.
13. Cf Experiences 172 suggesting that in the future correspondents might observe battle from balloons.
14. Cf his comparison of German and British army water-bottles, Experiences I 16.
15. A.R. Skelley, The Victorian Army at Home (1977)62; Michael Barthorp, British Infantry Uniforms Since 1660 (1982) 106-8.
16. Cf his criticisms of French commanders in the Franco-Prussian War, e.g. Experiences I 62-5, 571.
17. See also The Evidence of Archibald Forbes (Eastern Question Association Leaflets No.15,1877).
18. Memories 242.
19. 'The Military Operations in Bulgaria' JRUSI XXI (1877-8) 1065-85.
20. e.g. 'Skoboleff', Souvenirs. Forbes especially admired Skoboleff: on Wolseley's admiration for him, Wolseley, Letters 104. Also e.g. 'The Divine Figure from the North' (Alexander III), Barracks; 'Pretty Maritza from Tirnova', Memories.
21. Memories 197.

## 5. THE ZULU WAR

The Zulu War, unwanted by the government and denounced by the Liberals, continued controversial.<sup>1</sup> Chelmsford was criticised, privately by Disraeli and Wolseley and publicly by the press. Forbes' Daily News reports contributed to this: his first report from Zululand, condemning Chelmsford's strategy for denuding Natal of defence, had caused a sensation.<sup>2</sup> Later Chelmsford alleged that correspondents' criticism of him was politically motivated, and Forbes replied to this "calumny on an honourable profession"(p216) in another polemical article, 'Lord Chelmsford and the Zulu War', in the February Nineteenth Century,<sup>3</sup> condemning Chelmsford's conduct of the war and blaming him for Isandhlwana. He alleged that Chelmsford instead of concentrating for the decisive blow, had dangerously divided his force, despite available information had underestimated the Zulus, had failed to fortify Isandhlwana, and after Ulundi had failed to exploit the victory and finish the campaign. Ulundi was won by his troops, "a soldier's, not a general's fight"(p231), and he had, "neither merited nor achieved success"(p218). Forbes' article was a damning indictment and, though debatable in detail, valid in essence. It showed again his ability as a polemicist, and confirmed the majority view of the war.<sup>4</sup> His polemical articles were among his best but, presumably considering them no longer topical, he did not reprint them in book-form, using instead often mediocre reportage and fiction. Indicative of Forbes' reputation and impact, his polemical articles drew replies. Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Harness, who commanded the artillery in the Zulu War,

replied with 'The Zulu Campaign from a Military Point of View' in Fraser's Magazine.<sup>5</sup> He denied Chelmsford was "culpable" since, he asserted, he had committed "no voluntary error" (483). He claimed Chelmsford's attitude to the Zulus was natural since, "the Zulus also were savages" (478), that he rightly divided his troops and that he was not responsible for Isandhlwana, and that correspondents were ignorant. Harness' case was obviously inadequate: with impartial readers, the controversy increased Forbes' reputation.

The death of the Prince Imperial in the Zulu War, following the flight of Lieutenant Carey and his escort, was a cause célèbre which Forbes reported and later recounted in his memoirs.<sup>6</sup> He questioned the returned troopers though Carey refused to talk to him. He believed Carey guilty and was "very wrath".<sup>7</sup> His report to the Daily News condemned Carey, a judgment to which he adhered. In Britain the Prince's death caused much concern,<sup>8</sup> while the case of Captain Carey aroused controversy and raised crucial issues of the proper conduct of an officer in war. Officers, the service press, the newspapers and public were divided and, like the Tichborne claimant, Carey gained popular support from those who believed him the victim of aristocrats.<sup>9</sup> When Forbes lectured at Shoreditch and dismissed Carey as a coward, most of the audience disagreed and some gave, "three cheers for Captain Carey".<sup>10</sup> In his 1885 article, 'The Emperor and his Marshal' Forbes praised the Prince, "poor gallant lad", condemned Carey's "desertion" and asserted the "good death" in battle.<sup>11</sup> In his 1895 article 'The Death of the Prince Imperial' he described the return

of the escort, his questioning of the troopers, and the army's reactions, and he again condemned Carey as a coward. Forbes, brave and experienced, admired heroic commanders who fought courageously among their men.<sup>12</sup> He knew men could break under the strain of battle,<sup>13</sup> and he revered the warrior virtues of courage, honour and loyalty to comrades-in-arms. His response was typical of many of his contemporaries, and his typicality was crucial to his appeal. Like Queen Victoria, the United Service Gazette and others who believed Carey guilty, he was angry that a British officer lacked those virtues.<sup>14</sup> As when evaluating the Nile expedition, he ignored data which did not fit his interpretation, here including issues such as command and 'sauve qui peut' raised in the debate on Carey. Forbes, a son of the manse, condemned Carey, as he had the Second Empire, for moral failure. He also showed his inconsistency and that possibly he sometimes wrote for effect rather than from conviction, in his peroration on the Prince's death: in 1885 he described it as happy, in 1895 as miserable.

## 5. ZULU WAR

1. Clayden 372; Robert Blake, Disraeli (1969) 667-74.
2. D. News (7 May '79), An. Register 1879, 76.
3. 'Lord Chelmsford and the Zulu War', Nineteenth C.(Feb'80).
4. Nevertheless Chelmsford continued a royal favourite,  
Donald R. Morris, The Washing of the Spears (1968)  
593-4.
5. Arthur Harness, 'The Zulu Campaign From a Military Point  
of View', Fraser's Mag. (April '80). I disagree with  
Morris (593) on Forbes' and Harness' articles.
6. On the Prince Imperial episode largely from Forbes,  
especially 'The Death of the Prince Imperial', Memories  
201-15; ILN LXXV (1879); Annual Register 1879; Morris;  
Donald Featherstone, Captain Carey's Blunder (1973).  
Presumably the group lacked the 'bonding' of an  
effective small combat group, v Keegan, Face of Battle  
50-1, 71-2; Ellis, Sharp End 339-52. Cf the examples  
in the Zulu War of rescuing comrades, Forbes, Barracks  
129-50; Morris 487-90, 563.
7. Letter from Captain J. MacSwiney, 1 June '79, quo  
Featherstone 223.
8. An. Register 78.
9. Russell's Army and Navy Gazette favoured Carey; its rival  
United Service Gazette condemned him. The D.N.,  
differing editorially from Forbes, favoured Carey.  
He gained populist support, and support from fellow  
Devonians and Evangelicals.
10. United Service Gazette (29 Sept '79) quo Featherstone 176.
11. Forbes, 'The Emperor and his Marshal', Souvenirs, 73-4, 95.
12. Forbes, Souvenirs 1-46; Memories 363-6.
13. Forbes, 'Fire-Discipline', Barracks 220-7.
14. Cf G.W. Steevens, With Kitchener to Khartum (1898) 91.

## 6. MILITARY CONTROVERSIES I

Through the 1870s and '80s Forbes pronounced, in the serious reviews, on some of the major military controversies of the day, largely responding and publicising rather than initiating, but making a significant, and heeded, contribution to the debate. In 1878 the British occupation of Cyprus was a controversial political issue.<sup>1</sup> The Gladstonian Daily News which opposed the occupation, sent Forbes to report it. Established as a leading war correspondent, he was proudly judgmental and angered Wolseley, the first High Commissioner<sup>2</sup> - who had hoped for favourable publicity from him<sup>3</sup> - by reporting the extent of the garrison's sickness.<sup>4</sup> Though denied by Wolseley and the government and attacked by Conservative papers, Forbes' reporting was correct.<sup>5</sup> In October 1878 the Nineteenth Century published his article, 'The 'Fiasco' of Cyprus'.<sup>6</sup> Ignoring Gladstone's moralism, he argued an imperial and strategic case against the occupation. Cyprus was unsuitable as a base, with no adequate harbour, insufficient food resources, and so unhealthy that it incapacitated or killed the troops there. He condemned the strategy of attempting to defend India through Turkey: the Russians would attack through Afghanistan and should be stopped there. His article showed he was more than a reporter: a capable and trenchant controversialist, willing to pronounce his opinions and able to write convincingly on imperial strategic questions. He showed himself, unlike his employer, no Gladstonian but a tough-minded imperialist, contemptuous of politicians especially Disraeli and Cross. He favoured the Afghanistan strategy advocated by Roberts and others in India,

against the Turkish strategy of Wolseley and Maurice.

Flogging was an emotional, controversial issue, disputed by abolitionist radicals and retentionist officers, and much used in Chelmsford's force in South Africa.<sup>7</sup> Its cruelty was a theme of Forbes' army fiction, though he did not condemn flogging itself. In 1879 he published his article 'Flogging in the Army' in the October Nineteenth Century. He asserted the necessity of retaining flogging on active service, because of the type of unpatriotic lower-class recruit who enlisted as he could not do any better: without flogging, "it would be impossible to make war"(612). It did not deter recruiting, and the entire army favoured retention. He condemned party politics, politicians and especially radical "claptrappists", and warned of the decadence of patriotism and parliament which endangered Britain's military capability for a European war. He dismissed colonial campaign experience as irrelevant to great-power war, condemned short service and advocated conscription. The article showed his tough-mindedness, dogmatism, and unsubstantiated generalization. Forbes, famous as a war correspondent, was increasingly a bitter conservative polemicist.

In the period of Forbes' military journalism new weapons, increased firepower, foreign and especially German examples, caused much professional discussion and writing, in books, pamphlets and the service press.<sup>8</sup> As Howard Bailes has shown, several schools of military thought emerged. The continentalists were German-influenced "Prussophiles", who



included Charles Brackenbury and F.N. Maude, and asserted the primacy of continental wars and military practices and the relative unimportance of colonial experience. They emphasised the massed offensive, the necessity of casualties and the importance of morale, and condemned British "tactics of timidity", cover and attempted casualty-minimization. Opposing them were the traditionalists led by the Duke of Cambridge, and the imperial and British schools which included Wolseley, Maurice, Roberts, Hamilton and Henderson. Critical and selective towards continental examples, they condemned slavish imitation of the German and asserted the relevance of colonial war and, especially Henderson, of the American Civil War, and argued for cover, skirmishing and open order. German influence was probably greatest in the 'seventies following the Franco-Prussian War, then decreased. Nevertheless, as Henderson wrote, "English soldiers of the present generation" were "accustomed to have held up to them the supremacy of Prussia in all things warlike".<sup>9</sup> The continentalist minority continued vociferous and critical of the British army's training, tactics and failures.

The Franco-Prussian War was the first Forbes reported, and had a lasting influence on him. His war correspondence emphasised Prussian fighting qualities rather than firepower. In the Russo-Turkish War, like many contemporaries, he was impressed by the defeat at Plevna of the Russian assaults against entrenched troops with modern rifles, by increased firepower. He asserted discontinuity with the past, the dominance of weaponry over moral factors, the futility of frontal assault on entrenched riflemen, and that firepower

had outdated "unscientific heroism". He asserted the necessity of losses to win war, but also reported that Russian infantry became discouraged after repeated failures and losses. Later he reported only colonial campaigns - the Zulu and Afghan wars - but with more great-power than colonial war experience he continued to believe great-power war was crucial and colonial campaigns relatively unimportant. He re-entered the controversy on firepower and tactics with his article 'Fire-Discipline' in the December 1883 Fortnightly Review,<sup>10</sup> arguing from military history and his own battle experience. By fire-discipline he meant, "that conduct of the soldier under the stress of actual battle which is expected from him as the crowning result of assiduous moral and professional training"(218). It was the true test of soldiers. As the Germans knew, the purpose of battle was to win and for this casualties, sometimes heavy losses, were necessary: "the Germans have realised how much easier it is to spoil the omelette by not breaking eggs enough"(236). For this troops needed fire-discipline, from training, close-order tactics and being "blooded" by battle casualties. The Germans knew it was, "good for soldiers to die a little occasionally... their death does not discourage, but hardens their comrades. It seems brutal to write in this tone, but is not war all brutal?"(223). Most soldiers were cowards who would run away if they dared, but were constrained by the group, and fire-discipline decreased in loose order using cover, when more depended on the individual: when "physical contact is lost, the moral touch is impaired"(222). In battle, in attack and defence, close order though sometimes suicidal was sometimes effective. The British, as earlier wars

proved, were intrinsically good soldiers but their recent tactical training - "the paramount duty of dodging and sneaking...the 'cover at any price' training"(225,8) - unlike the German, demoralised and decreased fire-discipline, especially of inexperienced young soldiers, and caused the checks, panics and defeats at Isandhlwana and elsewhere in Zululand, at Tel-el-Kebir and Majuba. Afghan war experience did not enhance fire-discipline since the Afghans usually "played the dodging game" at long range. Though cavalry were "out of fashion with many professors of modern war"(239), the Germans rightly used them against infantry. As Mars-la-Tour showed, cavalry could succeed, despite heavy losses.

Forbes' article was a tough-minded, intransigent continentalist assertion of morale over firepower. It showed how his opinions had changed since the Russo-Turkish War, to emphasising the offensive rather than the defensive and arguing not the lethality of modern firepower, but the possibility of successful assault. He argued for 'cold steel' against firepower, for tradition against innovation. A cavalryman, he apparently refused to admit that firepower fundamentally changed battle. Despite Plevna he had become insufficiently concerned with firepower: too concerned with troops accepting casualties and insufficiently concerned with their inflicting them. Like many contemporaries, he underestimated the lethality of machine guns. His article again showed Forbes an intransigent continentalist. Like Maude and others of the school, he cited continental, especially German, exemplars and authorities, praised German troops, stated a tough-minded stoic or callous belief in the necessity of

sacrifice in war,<sup>11</sup> emphasised the importance of morale, cavalry potential against infantry and the necessity of losses in the attack, and criticised British tactics as excessively concerned with cover and minimizing losses rather than, like the Germans, with winning. Forbes was the publicist and populariser of the continentalists, reaching a wider readership, and especially civilian readership, than Maude or others of the school. Unlike the imperial school of military thought, he saw no special value in colonial war experience: it was significant only relative to great-power war. He cited colonial campaigns less than European wars, and used them or data to support his continentalism. Despite his knowledge of the Civil War - his father-in-law was an American general - Forbes did not see the Civil War as having specific lessons for the British army, but used it to support his continentalism. Like other traditionalists he believed contemporary British soldiers inferior to their early 19th century predecessors. However in his article, unlike elsewhere in his writings and unlike the Jeremiahs of British physical and moral deterioration, he claimed this was not intrinsic but only from wrong training. In his article he argued plausibly, but his use of evidence was selective and ignored other, crucial factors. He had reported the Zulu War and visited Isandhlwana after the massacre, but available evidence contradicted his claim that fire-discipline was inadequate and there was no "vigorous attempt at a rally". He was right about the formation used, but ignored the crucial factor of inadequate firepower due to insufficient available ammunition. His assessment of Majuba was similarly distorted by monocausal explanation to support his

case. He rejected the interpretation that the British failed there from inadequate musketry. Yet the evidence suggested that the crucial factors were British complacency, underrating the Boers, tactical inferiority and inadequate use of cover and especially of firepower.<sup>12</sup> Similarly with Tel-el-Kebir, the initial British failure was arguably as much because of inadequate fire-power as inadequate fire-discipline. In its qualities as in its limitations his article was typical of his better military journalism, and it increased public awareness of a major military debate.

Through the 'eighties, no longer employed as a war correspondent, Forbes wrote intermittent articles on military subjects, of varied quality and originality.<sup>13</sup> Among the grievances of rankers and the concerns of army reformers were rations. Forbes' short articles 'Soldiers' Rations' in the Nineteenth Century of December 1888 claimed rations had improved since he served, and "the British soldier appears to fare moderately well".<sup>14</sup> Soldiers deserved good treatment and there should be further improvement. So remembering his own experience, Forbes continued concerned for the welfare of other ranks; he never fully identified with the officer corps. He showed himself a moderate reformer, emphasising the improvements already made.

## 6. MILITARY CONTROVERSIES I: NOTES

1. Articles in the controversy included Gladstone's 'England's Mission', Nineteenth C. (Sept '78) denouncing the occupation, and Kitchener's anonymous 'Notes from Cyprus' Blackwood's (Aug '79) supporting it.
2. J.H. Lehmann, All Sir Garnet (1964) 129-30.
3. Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 23 July 1878, Letters 31.
4. Forbes, 'My Campaign in Pall Mall', Barracks 311-13; Lehmann 232-4.
5. Stephen Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain.I. The Nineteenth Century (1981) 220.
6. The Nineteenth Century, launched in 1877, was defence-minded: contributors included Arnold-Forster, Beresford, G.S. Clarke, Hamley, Hozier, Roberts and Wolseley.
7. Annual Register 1867 127-8; ib 1879 54-62; Harness, 'Zulu Campaign' 486; Clayden 353-4; Gwynn & Tuckwell I 293, 297; Joseph Arch, Life (1966 ed) 120; H.B. Bonner, Charles Bradlaugh (1894) II 201, 259; J.L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain I (1932) 270-3; Trevor Lloyd, The General Election of 1880 (1968) 52, 105; Skelley 147-51; Spiers 62-3, 87-90, 171; J.R. Dinwiddy, 'The early nineteenth-century campaign against flogging in the army', EHR (April 1982).
8. On weapon change and British responses partly from J.R.U.S.I.; G.F.R. Henderson, The Science of War (1905); J.F.C. Fuller, The Conduct of War 1789-1961 (1961); Jay Luvaas, The Education of an Army (1965); H.H.R. Bailes, 'The influence of continental examples and colonial warfare upon the reform of the late Victorian army' (unpub. London Ph.D. thesis 1980); Brian Bond, War and Society in Europe, 1870-1970 (1984).
9. Henderson 127.
10. Forbes, 'Fire-Discipline', Fortnightly R. (Dec '83), reprinted almost unchanged in Barracks, to which page references. On men in battle see Keegan Face of Battle; Ellis, Sharp End of War; Holmes, Firing Line. Forbes' conclusions are compatible with their findings, though he did not consider prolonged battle exposure. See also Kipling, 'The Drums of Fore and Aft'.

11. Cf Richard Holmes, "that stoic indifference to casualties which so easily passes for callousness", R. Holmes, The Little Field-Marshal (1981) 113.
12. Brian Bond, 'The South African War 1880-1' in (ed) B. Bond, Victorian Military Campaigns (1967) 227-37; Joseph H. Lehmann, The First Boer War (1972) 239-50.
13. e.g. 'An American Criticism of the Egyptian Campaign', Nineteenth C. (Aug '84); 'In Case of Invasion' ib (April '85), the former indirectly publicising G.S. Clarke's views on coast bombardment, and the latter largely on the Engineer and Railway Volunteer Staff Corps.
14. 'Soldiers' Rations' Nineteenth C. (Dec '88) 835. Cf Skelley 64-8. For Forbes on the employment of ex-soldiers see 'Parade of the Commissionaires', Camps; cf Skelley chapter III.

## 7. MILITARY CONTROVERSIES II

Forbes was prolific and sometimes inconsistent, notably in his published opinions of Wolseley.<sup>1</sup> Before the Ashanti War Forbes had in the Daily News, arguing from the Red River Expedition, recommended Wolseley's appointment for Ashanti.<sup>2</sup> He resented Wolseley's Pocket-Book criticism of war correspondents, and publicly disagreed with him on the sickness of the Cyprus garrison. Yet he praised Wolseley's 1882 campaign and in 1885 published a panegyric, 'Wolseley: A Character Sketch', praising him as brave, "a heaven-born soldier", praising the efficiency of the 'Ring' and claiming the Nile failure was not Wolseley's fault.<sup>3</sup> Forbes was proud, independent and undeferential and, in asserting his own and his profession's expertise, was willing to challenge high-ranking and famous officers, including Wolseley and Maurice.<sup>4</sup> Maurice, as Staff College professor, official historian and military journalist, continued Wolseley's propagandist, his "second and in many respects his most able pen".<sup>5</sup> During his ascent Wolseley had used the press, as Forbes noted, "writing slightly and opprobiously of a profession, and at the same time...making assiduous endeavour to be well-spoken of by that profession".<sup>6</sup> Forbes had not forgiven his gibes. In 'Errors of the Experts', in the March 1889 Contemporary Review Forbes, sarcastically and specifically, attacked Wolseley's and Maurice's writings for historical and military inaccuracy and false conclusions. He alleged their errors incurred continental experts' contempt, "the strident laugh and guttural sneer of the Kaiserplatz"(134). He condemned the Pocket-Book as erroneous and largely



obsolete, and Wolseley's use of heavy cavalry and guardsmen for his 'camelry'. Forbes' was a damning indictment, convincingly argued. It showed his extensive, if sometimes superficial, knowledge of recent military history; his acceptance of continental orthodoxy, as on the forward deployment of artillery; and his underrating, possibly from cavalry prejudice, of firepower. It was inopportune for Wolseley and probably contributed to the decline of his reputation.

The Gordon Relief Expedition was the most publicised and controversial Victorian small war<sup>7</sup> and, following publication of the official history, Forbes considered it in 'The Failure of the Nile Campaign' in the January 1892 Contemporary Review. He criticised the official history as inaccurate and muddled, and condemned Wolseley for blundering, delaying and causing the expedition's failure. Forbes alleged that Wolseley despised, "the average Tommy Atkins from Whitechapel"(42) and bungled the camel corps by using socially élite troops instead of line infantry, "the real fighting men of the British army"(41). Forbes' article was a convincing polemic though he omitted much which could have strengthened his case, including the route chosen and the inexperienced Canadians. In criticising the Household troops he expressed widely-held army attitudes.<sup>8</sup> He was a journalist rather than a military analyst: quick, effective but sometimes superficial, and his articles, though competent, lacked the depth and insights of G.S. Clarke's analyses. Indicative of Forbes' lack of thoroughness, he did not fully take into account previous contributions to

the debate, oversimplified, and ignored data that did not fit his interpretation. He ignored Clarke's 1892 article, accepted unquestioned the Nile route, and ignored the controversy on Wilson. This flawed his article and lessened its impact on informed readers. Nevertheless it probably contributed to the further decline of Wolseley's reputation. It drew a reply from a Wolseleyite journalist, Charles Williams, an experienced war correspondent who had been involved in controversy and litigation over his reporting of the Nile expedition.<sup>9</sup> In 1892 he published in Maurice's largely Wolseleyite United Service Magazine, 'The Nile Campaign. A Reply to Mr. Forbes'.<sup>10</sup> He praised Forbes as "a brilliant correspondent", but alleged his criticism of Wolseley was unsupported by the evidence, and that he relied on the official history, "this bogus work" which was falsified to vindicate the politicians. He attempted to vindicate Wolseley, blaming Gladstone. Thus he rightly showed the politicians' responsibility which Forbes had ignored, and that Forbes had concentrated too exclusively on Wolseley. Nevertheless Williams had not disproved Forbes' allegation that Wolseley had blundered. He indicated one fault of Forbes: that, common in the polemicist and crusading journalist, of taking an insufficiently wide view, and blaming too narrowly and exclusively.

The Victorian army almost never obtained sufficient recruits, and problems of recruiting and recruits' poor physique were of continued concern to military reformers and received intermittent press publicity.<sup>11</sup> In another polemical article, 'The Recruiting Problem' in the March

1891 Nineteenth Century<sup>12</sup> Forbes condemned short service and the inadequacy of the present troops, unlike their long-service predecessors, for great-power war: "your narrow-chested, 'herring-bodied', undersized gutter-weed is pure trash on campaign"(400), and great-power war was "incomparably more formidable"(439) than colonial war. He criticised politicians', especially Campbell-Bannerman's, ignorance, denied the army was truly voluntary, and warned its discipline was precarious, maintained with difficulty against "the spirit of demagoguery which is being so sedulously instilled into the lower classes"(403). Short service was disastrous for imperial defence. He praised the old East India Company European regiments and advocated a short-service home army, raised by conscription - "the sacrifice all other European nations make for their fatherlands"(404) - and a better-paid long-service imperial army. Forbes' article was competent but unoriginal, expressing ideas already widespread, without reference to those who had already proposed them. Here he aligned himself with Roberts, Dilke, Wilkinson and other dual-army advocates, and against Wolseley, Campbell-Bannerman and other defenders of the Cardwell system. Attitudes to the Company European regiments were a shibboleth: Roberts, himself ex Bengal Horse Artillery, praised them, but Wolseley condemned them as, "the worst and most dangerous body of men we ever had".<sup>13</sup> Criticism of Campbell-Bannerman was widespread among army reformers.<sup>14</sup> Since the 1870s conscription had been intermittently advocated, often by retired officers, though usually believed politically unacceptable.<sup>15</sup> In 1889 Charles Brackenbury noted the demand for, "conscription

under the fashionable name of universal service": he opposed the "grinding blood tax".<sup>16</sup> However Wolseley, Roberts and the 1892 Wantage Report claimed that it might be necessary.<sup>17</sup> Forbes' article was bitter and denunciatory: still German-influenced continentalist, and increasingly expressing the attitudes similar to those of Wolseley and the 'new' Right: contempt for politicians and a pessimistic belief in the decline of Britain and the threatening rise of radicalism and other anti-national, disintegrative forces.

In the late 19th century military planners attempted to adapt to increased firepower and to foresee the warfare of the near future. Journalists are seldom original thinkers but they sometimes see the significance of new ideas and publicise them. Forbes was militarily conservative and in his later years, unlike in the Russo-Turkish War, tended to underestimate the effects of increased firepower. However in his May 1891 Nineteenth Century article 'The Warfare of the Future' he took up ideas discussed in the service press though less publicised outside it. He argued the relative inconclusiveness of modern land warfare compared to that of the smoothbore period: with machine guns and magazine rifles the decisive advantage was to the defence. In future the successful offensive would prove impossible and there would be stalemate. Citing G.S. Clarke he claimed that future fortifications would be low earthworks. Arguing from the Franco-Prussian War he claimed that cavalry would no longer be effective in battle, "Magazine and machine guns would seem to sound the knell of possible employment of cavalry in battle".<sup>18</sup> He concluded that war would be more costly

than the costliest preparation. His article was a perceptive analysis which later war was to justify. Yet in his 1894 Blackwood's article on cavalry he advocated cavalry charges. Such inconsistency or apparent inconsistency might be justified by his omission of any time-scale from his future-war article. Possibly he was an inconsistent journalist who, rather than forming a consistent corpus of military thinking, took up an idea and argued a case, then later took up a different idea. Apparently there were continuing themes and prejudices, rather than consistent thinking, in his military writings. His article also again showed his extensive military knowledge and that, to keep up to date, he read recent works: for example, his citing of G.S. Clarke and, in his 'Errors' article, of Brialmont. His article in part anticipated Bloch though Forbes, a more limited thinker, failed to follow his ideas through to the conclusions Bloch reached.

The Victorian era was one of progress, increased humanitarianism and refusal to tolerate formerly-accepted miseries. There was medical progress and, largely due to Russell's reports, changed attitudes to the fate of other ranks in war. Armies improved their medical services,<sup>19</sup> and as reserves were the voluntary Red Cross societies and, in Britain since 1878, the St. John Ambulance Association.<sup>20</sup> In war foreign volunteers sometimes provided additional medical services: in the Franco-Prussian War Dilke served with a Prussian ambulance unit, and Kitchener with a French unit.<sup>21</sup> There was in this period much discussion of the laws of war and the humanization of military practice, and

some international agreement, notably the 1864 Geneva Convention, on the treatment of the wounded.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile weapon innovation, increasing firepower and lethality led to discussion of future war: largely on tactics, cavalry and later, with Bloch, on stalemate. Troops' ability to accept heavy losses and the possibility of casualties demoralising them were also discussed in the service press, and by Forbes in 'Fire-Discipline'. Opinions differed on whether future war would increase casualties. Some argued modern weapons would make war less destructive: for example, the anonymous short article in Chambers's Journal in May 1897, 'Science and Slaughter'.<sup>23</sup> It claimed that more recent wars had a lower proportion of casualties and that in land war, unlike naval war, increased destructive power was counteracted by other changes. In attacking, tactics - with open order, rapid movement and cover - would neutralise machine-gun and rifle fire. The dominant opinion, however, was that firepower would increase battle losses, even if the prevalent short-war illusion led some to assume that total war losses might not increase. Bloch, who had studied the Russo-Turkish War, exceptionally postulated both increased battle casualties and long war.<sup>24</sup>

In June 1892 Forbes attended a lecture at the R.U.S.I. by Mr. John Furley on 'Ambulance Work and Materiel in Peace and War'.<sup>25</sup> Furley, a veteran of the Red Cross and voluntary medical assistance in foreign wars, lectured on vehicles and equipment and the role in war of the voluntary medical organizations. Citing German authorities, he claimed that with more casualties more stretcher-bearers

would be needed. In the discussion following Sir V.K. Barrington claimed that modern weapons would not increase the proportion of wounded. Forbes spoke, first asserting, "My own experience covers the battle-fields of three continents, and some ten years of my life were spent in caring for wounded men".<sup>26</sup> He disagreed with "my friend" Furley and stated his own views. From this he later wrote his article, 'The Future of the Wounded in War', published in 1895.<sup>27</sup> In it he claimed that the "amenities of warfare", deliberately limiting its lethality and suffering, were artificial, incompatible with its true nature, and in theory preposterous. He had heard Furley lecture, "apparently in the full conviction that the wounded of the future would fare as do the wounded of the present"(247). Forbes had stated that in a future great battle the number of wounded would enormously exceed the capability of the medical services and that after it, "he would probably find a wounded brigadier-general competing for a share of 'a country dung-cart'(ib). Others disagreed: "The Philistine audience, which included sundry brigadier generals, giped at me"(ib). However, later he found the best continental authorities agreed with him and claimed that future stretcher-bearer losses would prevent the removal during battle of the wounded. In the Franco-Prussian and Russo-Turkish wars he had already recognised this, and stated in his war correspondence that from the losses of medical personnel the service already "approached impracticability" and in future war would be impossible as improved weapons would in the first battle "wipe out the bearer organization"(248). It was impossible to picture the reality of the next great battle. Weapons

would be more lethal with new explosives, quick-firing artillery, machine guns, high-velocity rifles, and possibly aircraft bombing. Future war would probably be "short, sharp and decisive"(252) but the battles prolonged with immense numbers of casualties: too many to cope with. They would have to be left until after the battle, when minimal army medical services and the Red Cross would tend them, while the army moved on to continue fighting. There would no longer be military bearer companies as the men would be needed as combatants. Nevertheless many wounded would survive. He asserted his own experience - "I have bandaged and attended to more wounded under fire than any man in Europe who is not a professional military surgeon"(254) - that wounded were sometimes better left than moved. In contrast to Peninsular War soldiers' toughness and suffering, in British colonial campaigns, "the soldier is coddled nowadays to the extent of being really deteriorated by over-tenderness"(254). He concluded that future war might one day force the peoples of the civilised world to choose between leaving tens of thousands of wounded unattended on the battlefield, or ending war - and so might end war.

The article was typical of Forbes: competently argued from extensive knowledge; citing his experience, military history and continental military writers; continental-influenced, tough-minded, controversial and claiming the present was softer and easier than the past. Much was widely accepted including the lower casualty rate of recent wars, the deterioration from former mental and physical toughness and the future importance of artillery, though



he emphasised this less than Bloch, and, unlike Bloch, the assumption of a short war of movement and decisive battles. His grim message of the future of the wounded was, despite the continental experts, exceptional in Britain and new to most of his readers. As in his Russo-Turkish War reporting he again emphasised the lethality of firepower, which he had tended to understate in his writing on cavalry. Like Bloch he portrayed future war as grimly unromantic, as mass butchery not individual adventure and heroism. His article was typical of him also in its assertion of his own experience and expertise; and in its limitations, his failure to consider alternatives. While emphasising weapon development he failed to consider the possibility of some defensive counter to this, of different types of battle, or of major medical development. Though elsewhere in his writings concerned with morale and possible demoralization, he failed to consider the effect on soldiers' morale of knowing that if wounded they would be virtually abandoned. Possibly he assumed from his experience of Russian troops that this would not be decisive, but he failed to relate it to his pessimistic view of modern British soldiers. Nevertheless the article was among his more original and controversial contributions to the debate on the future of war and to public awareness of defence issues.

Forbes further criticised the condition of the army in 'The Bogus Apotheosis of the British Army' in the April 1894 Contemporary Review. He condemned as inaccurate and dangerously optimistic the quasi-official Army Book of the British Empire and warned that the army was unready for war,

with soldiers physically inadequate, localization failed, an "unsafe" subversive element, an insufficient reserve, unsuccessful Militia with much desertion, and cavalry under strength. The army was neither national nor voluntary but, "a mercenary army, and all but wholly a helot army"(523) enlisted from individual necessity. He claimed conscript armies were superior to non-conscript. His article was polemical, dogmatic, exaggerated and generalised without adequate data: another truculent assertion of his military expertise. While loyal to the army he did not romanticise it, but emphasised its faults. His article publicised important issues already much discussed in military circles and the military press. In fact men enlisted from varied motives including "the clothes" and even desire for a military funeral.<sup>28</sup> Some were forced by necessity but others, like Hector MacDonald, chose freely.<sup>29</sup> The claim that the army was not truly voluntary was repeatedly made, and was later used by advocates of compulsory service: George Shee quoted Defoe, "It is poverty makes men soldiers".<sup>30</sup> The plight of reservists already concerned military reformers and publicists, and Forbes exaggerated with his unsubstantiated allegation that one third were tramps: in 1894 9.6 percent of reservists were unemployed.<sup>31</sup> He ignored the common expedient, publicised by Kipling, of re-enlistment under an assumed name.<sup>32</sup> He understated the Militia's contribution to the regular army and, possibly extrapolating from civilian unrest, exaggerated discontent within the army. He again expressed his continentalism and pessimistic 'new' Right perception of internal and external threat.

Since the 1860s the nature, tactics and weapons of mounted troops had been controversial: whether they should remain primarily traditional shock-action arme blanche cavalry, or change to primarily mounted infantry.<sup>33</sup> Among cavalry officers, the orthodoxy was traditionalist: the primacy of the charge with sword and lance. The traditionalists, who included such continentalist military theorists as F.N. Maude, were encouraged by continental, especially German, examples. Differing from them were the relatively few officers such as Sir Henry Havelock and Colonel George Denison who argued for the total or partial replacement of cavalry by mounted rifles or mounted infantry; and those, including Wolseley and Roberts who favoured cavalry training for both mounted infantry and shock roles. Some civilians claimed that fire-power had nullified traditional cavalry,<sup>34</sup> and in 1894 Shaw ridiculed the cavalry spirit and arme blanche in Arms and the Man. Also in 1894 Forbes entered the controversy on cavalry with an article in Blackwood's Magazine. Blackwood's was tory, prestigious, and old-fashioned in format and contributors' anonymity. Its eminent military contributors included Hamley, Wolseley, Kitchener and Lugard. It was indicative of Forbes' status and his conservatism that he contributed to it.

In his article 'The Cavalry Arm of the British Service' Forbes stated that the Franco-Prussian War showed cavalry's achievement against infantry, and revolutionised continental attitudes to cavalry. The war showed that in battle there could be times of crisis when cavalry were decisive against infantry:"when, in spite of the fire of breech-loading rifles,

the bravest infantry, if assailed at the right movement, may be ridden over like a flock of sheep".<sup>35</sup> Since then the continental powers agreed that cavalry were essential in war. Their role was to protect, screen, and gain information, and in battle to attack flank or rear or create diversion. He cited von der Goltz on the necessity of their defeating enemy cavalry in order to achieve their own functions. He asserted the importance, shown in the continental wars, of cavalry morale. Experts doubted the British cavalry's competence, and the 1882 Egyptian campaign had warned of the "chaos in which our cavalry organization is allowed to stagnate".<sup>36</sup> Inferior to German cavalry, inadequately trained, under establishment in men and horses, their faults shown by manoeuvres, the British cavalry were unready for war and inadequate against continental cavalry. They still had their traditional faults, as under Wellington, of indiscipline and disorder. Forbes proposed reforms: more cavalry officers in high positions, more supervision by senior officers, officers more professional, more and better training, and fewer but stronger regiments with seven at war strength.<sup>37</sup> Forbes' article was critical, pessimistic and dogmatic, generalising without producing evidence. It again showed his inconsistency and changing opinions on major issues. When reporting the Russo-Turkish War and again in his 1891 future-warfare article he had claimed that firepower made effective cavalry charges impossible. Later his 1895 article 'The Future of the Wounded in War' emphasised the lethality of modern firepower and was apparently incompatible with his cavalry article. The latter ignored the American Civil War and colonial campaigns and was dominated by German military

thought, as indicated by his citing German writers and practice and F.N. Maude, one of the most extreme continental British military writers. It was not comprehensive and omitted much including the best-weapon controversy and the dismounted firepower role. It was conservative cavalry orthodoxy.

#### 7. MILITARY CONTROVERSIES II: NOTES

1. On Wolseley see F. Maurice & G. Arthur, The Life of Lord Wolseley (1924); Joseph H. Lehmann, All Sir Garnet (1964); Preston.
2. Villiers, Peaceful Personalities 251.
3. 'Wolseley: A Character Sketch', Souvenirs 156-92.
4. Cf his later criticism of Moltke's history of the Franco-Prussian War, Memories 47-69.
5. Jay Luvaas, The Education of an Army (1965) 174. Maurice had recently engaged in public controversy with Dilke, answering Dilke's 'The Present Position of European Politics' with The Balance of Military Power in Europe (1888). On Maurice see F. Maurice, Sir Frederick Maurice (1913); Luvaas.
6. 'Soldiers I have known', Memories 354. Like Roberts, Wolseley also tried to use other publicists e.g. Wolseley to Dilke, 5, 19 Nov '87, Ad. Ms 43,914, Dilke Papers, BL.
7. Anon (G.S. Clarke), 'The Campaign in the Sudan', Edinburgh R. (July '90); G.S. Clarke, My Working Life (1927) 47-68; Studies of an Imperialist (1928) 78-82; Maurice & Arthur 172-209; Lehmann 339-79; Preston passim.
8. e.g. Ian Hamilton 172-84. Hamilton claimed that if Roberts commanded he would have saved Gordon.

9. On Williams see J.P.D. French, 'Introduction' to F.W. von Herbert, The Defence of Plevna, 1877 (1911) vi. Charles Williams, 'How we lost Gordon', Fortnightly R. (May '85) blamed Sir Charles Wilson. Anon, 'The War Correspondent', Saturday R. (27 Jun '85) criticised Williams. On the litigation 'Williams versus Beresford Hope', 7210-26, NAM; for a brief account D.K. Smurthwaite, 'Scandals', N.A.M. Annual Report 1972-1973, 26-7; I disagree with his view.
10. Charles Williams, 'The Nile Campaign. A Reply to Mr. Forbes', United Service Mag. IV NS (1892).
11. Lord Brabazon, 'Decay of Bodily Strength in Towns', Nineteenth C. (May '87); W.C.B. Tunstall, 'Imperial Defence 1870-1897', CHBE III; Brian Bond, 'Recruiting the Victorian Army 1870-92', Vic.Stud. V (1962); Hamer; Skelley; Spiers.
12. 'The Recruiting Problems', Nineteenth C. (March '91). Forbes was right about recruits' physical quality, Skelley 25,282.
13. Wolseley to Dilke, 19 Nov '87, Ad Ms 43,914, Dilke Papers, BL.Cf Forbes, Colin Campbell (1895) 215.
14. e.g. Spenser Wilkinson, 'The Civilian Minister', National R. (Aug '95) rp War and Policy (1900) 274-84; W.St.J. Brodrick, Records & Reactions (1939) 84.
15. Edward S. May, Changes and Chances of a Soldier's Life (1925) 151-2; Skelley 263.
16. C.B. Brackenbury, 'A Real Volunteer Army', Contemp.R. (June '89) 929-38.
17. Bond, 'Recruiting' 337.
18. 'The Warfare of the Future', Nineteenth C. (May '91) 793. For contemporaries' ideas see JRUSI; I.S. Bloch, Modern Weapons and Modern War (1900); J.F.C. Fuller, The Conduct of War 1789-1961 (1972) 128-30; T.H.E. Travers, 'The Offensive and the Problems of Innovation in British Military Thought', J.Contemp.Hist. XIII (1978); 'Technology, Tactics and Morale: Jean de Bloch, the Boer War and British Military Theory, 1900-1914', J.Mod.Hist. L (1979); Spiers 229-30; Bailes thesis chapters 4,5; R.T. Stearn, 'Wells and War', Wellsian VNS (1983), Bond, War and Society 45-8.

19. On army medical change partly from 'Ambulance', EBI; Redmond McLaughlin, The Royal Army Medical Corps (1972).
20. The British National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded (later the British Red Cross) was established 1870: see S.H. Wantage, Lord Wantage, V.C., K.C.B. (1907) 172-9.
21. Villiers, Pictures 12, Gwynn & Tuckwell I 104-8; Jenkins 60-2; Magnus, Kitchener 22; Featherstone, Carey 42.
22. G. Best, 'How Right is Might? Some Aspects of the International Debate about How to Fight Wars and How to Win Them, 1870-1918' in (ed) Geoffrey Best & Andrew Wheatcroft, War, Economy and the Military Mind (1976) 120-35.
23. Anon, 'Science and Slaughter', Chambers's J. XIV (22 May '97) 324-6.
24. I.S. Bloch, Modern Weapons 9, 13, 27; 'Some Lessons of the Transvaal War', Contemp. R. (April 1900) 458.
25. JRUSI (1892) 827-50.
26. Ib 854.
27. 'The Future of the Wounded in War', Memories 241-56.
28. E.J. Hardy, 'Soldiers I have met', Chambers's J. (6 Feb '97) 84. Cf Hardy, Mr. Thomas Atkins (1900) 8, 19-23. Hardy was a chaplain and author of How to be Happy though Married.
29. A British Officer (W.E. Cairnes), An Absent-Minded War (1900) 74; Trevor Royle, Death Before Dishonour: the true story of Fighting Mac (1982) 27-30.
30. George F. Shee, The Briton's First Duty: The Case for Conscription (1901) 115, see also 114-20. Shee's book led to the establishment of the National Service League (1902) of which he became secretary and which used it as a 'handbook', Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict (1949) 13-35; Allison thesis 18-24.

31. Skelley 210-14. See also Frank Richards, Old Soldier Sahib (1936, '65) 339; Albert V. Tucker, 'Army and Society in England 1970-1900: A Reassessment of the Cardwell Reforms', J.Br.Stud.II (1963) 136.
32. R. Kipling, 'Back to the Army Again', Pall Mall Mag. (June '94); Richards 237-8; Skelley 214.
33. On cavalry partly from Erskine Childers, War and the Arme Blanche (1910); H.C.B. Rogers, The Mounted Troops of the British Army (1959) 195-231; Brian Bond, 'Doctrine and Training in the British Cavalry 1870-1914' in (ed) Michael Howard, The Theory and Practice of War: Essays Presented to Captain B.H. Liddell Hart (1965) 97-120; Bailes thesis 143-77; Richard Holmes, The Little Field-Marshal: Sir John French (1981) 151-65.
34. See Bloch, Modern Weapons 12-3, 319.
35. 'The Cavalry Arm of the British Service', Blackwood's (Aug '94) 169.
36. Ib 174.
37. Ib 181.



## 8. FORBES ON WAR CORRESPONDENCE

In the nineteenth century technical change and other innovation brought about new professions whose practitioners attempted to raise their status. War correspondence emerged as a "craft" or "profession" during and after the Crimean War, largely through Russell.<sup>1</sup> He wrote about war correspondence and its controversies, notably security and censorship. His approach was largely personal, defending his own conduct and citing his own experience. In this as in much else his example was followed by other correspondents. Forbes also wrote intermittently, largely centred on himself, on war correspondence and its controversies. Proud of being a war correspondent, he tried to boost his profession's reputation. In reporting the Russo-Turkish War he asserted themes which recurred through his writings: the dangers, difficulties, hardships, endurance and exceptional rides of correspondents, especially himself, and the supreme importance of communications.<sup>2</sup> He asserted his own integrity and accuracy, criticising those of some of his rivals.<sup>3</sup> He noted the difficulty of objective assessment following battle experience and the correspondent's lack of an accurate overall picture. In his 1877 lecture to the R.U.S.I. he stated that as a war correspondent he tried to confine himself "to the treatment of military topics, and to the description of what bears upon them directly", apparently implying this was the correspondent's proper function.<sup>4</sup> Like other correspondents and war artists, he asserted his commitment and experience and the contrast with the stay-at-home newspaper reader. He wrote in 1886, "I have spent the last decade almost wholly

in campaigning, and have witnessed cannon-smoke almost as often as I have seen the peaceful smoke from the domestic grate".<sup>5</sup>

From 1870 Forbes was friendly with Russell: in 1899, when both were retired and old, Forbes wrote advising him to have his teeth extracted: "many years ago, I had every tooth in my head pulled out, and in comfortably fitting false teeth have been dentally happy ever since".<sup>6</sup> He acknowledged Russell's pre-eminence and in his lectures in the 'seventies praised him with "a sustained panegyric".<sup>7</sup> He continued this theme in his later writings on war correspondence, though emphasising that he himself, in contrast to Russell, was of the post-telegraphic "newer school" who faced greater difficulty, danger and risk of death.<sup>8</sup> Russell in the Crimea had established the role of the war correspondent as the critic of military authorities and exposé of military faults and abuses and, to a lesser extent, Forbes continued this role. In the Russo-Turkish War he criticised Russian faults. In Cyprus he revealed the inadequate medical facilities, and in the Zulu War he criticised Chelmsford's strategy. Retired from war correspondence, in his two final decades, he continued as a military critic and defended correspondents.

Some senior officers had long disliked war correspondents and wanted to ban or limit them. By 1880 such antipathy had been increased by the criticism of Chelmsford and by the Macpherson affair in the Afghan War.<sup>9</sup> Macpherson of the Standard, a leading Conservative paper, evaded censor-

ship and alleged British atrocities including the burning of villages and shooting of prisoners, comparing them to the Bulgarian atrocities. Roberts expelled him, the Opposition exploited the issue and there was public controversy. Forbes, who had reported the Afghan War, entered the controversy with his article in the January 1880 Nineteenth Century, 'War Correspondence and the Authorities'.<sup>10</sup> He criticised the new regulations for war correspondents and replied to allegations. Lying war correspondents were rare, though there was recently in Afghanistan one who "branded with atrocious cruelty the soldiers of a noble regiment", an allusion to Macpherson. Telling the truth could never be detrimental; if there were disaster the nation should know so that it could demand reform. Criticism of commanders did not harm morale since the army formed its own opinions. The argument of providing the enemy with information applied only against a civilised enemy, not in colonial war, and since the Crimea, "We have only been slaughtering barbarians, with the occasional alternative of being slaughtered by them"(188). In "real war" - a phrase indicative of his continentalism - there was risk of correspondents providing information to the enemy, but the Germans and Russians believed the advantages of correspondents outweighed the risks, and Forbes agreed with them. He eulogised his profession: "Is this craft of ours, not less noble than that of the clergyman himself, not less patriotic than that of him who gladly dies for his country?" The public should know what was happening and the troops should know that they know. Better the truth than a "fool's paradise"; the nation, if informed, could demand reform, as following Russell's Crimean

revelations. Correspondents by providing information and suggestions on their own and foreign armies assisted officers and contributed to military effectiveness: "the cause of military science is benefitted by the presence in the field of intelligent and impartial correspondents". Officers crowded to hear correspondents lecture on foreign armies at the United Service Institution. Also war correspondents' reporting stimulated "the martial ardour of a nation" and encouraged enlistment by the adventurous, not "feckless waifs and strays". Forbes' article ably defended his profession. He asserted war correspondents' status, that they were not, as Wolseley alleged, ignorant prejudiced camp-followers, but military experts from whom officers could learn. His arguments, later research suggests, were largely though not entirely valid. As he himself later realised he was wrong on the risk in European war of correspondents providing information to the enemy. He was right on the benefits of press exposure of faults, as in the Crimea, and on correspondents' support for war and encouragement of recruiting.

Replying to Forbes' article and stating the authorities' case was Viscount Melgund's 'Newspaper Correspondents in the Field' in the March 1880 Nineteenth Century.<sup>11</sup> He praised Forbes as "among the best military critics of the day"(435), but claimed others were ignorant liars and that correspondents should be controlled. He claimed, "the English press is a great power"(437) and that correspondents could by lying or inopportune truth harmfully affect public opinion, by criticising commanders harm troops' morale, and give information to the enemy. Public knowledge of the

horrors of war would reduce support for it. Correspondents were inaccurate, irresponsible, and boosted their favourite officers while maligning others. Melgund's article was a capable attempt to minimise correspondents' credibility. His attitudes, though held by some in authority including Wolseley, were seldom publicly stated by them when the press was probably at the peak of its influence and they more often flattered than criticised it. Though some of his points were valid, he failed to fully answer, still less destroy, Forbes' case. He ignored Forbes' argument that correspondents, as in the Crimea, exposed faults and contributed to reforms. His basic premise was the authorities': that the public should accept the official version, and that criticism was unnecessary.

In the following years Forbes wrote intermittently on war correspondence. In 'Doughtown Scrip' he briefly considered the impact of war correspondence, describing how New Zealand miners, largely Scots, identified with the British forces in colonial war: "They stand with Chard and Bromhead inside the frail stronghold of Rorke's Drift, and in fancy, with flushed faces and sparkling eyes, they charge home with the big troopers at Kassassin".<sup>12</sup> In his pieces on the Russo-Turkish War and Afghan War he again emphasised the dangers and heroism of correspondents especially himself, and the Czar's awarding him the Order of St. Stanilaus for bravery. He mentioned that war correspondence often engendered jealousy and ill-feeling, a point which he usually ignored but which Villiers and others stated. His 'Wolseley: A Character Sketch' denounced his criticism of

correspondents as "drones" as an "unfounded aspersion". He asserted that the correspondent was, "the servant of the public for whom he toils harder than any soldier; to whom rest and ease are strangers, and who faces danger and meets death in the line of duty with a courage as gallant as that shown by any soldier".<sup>13</sup> In his 1889 'Errors of the Experts' he argued the fallibility of Wolseley's and Maurice's military writings and, by implication, his own superior expertise. He asserted the reliability of correspondents' campaign narratives and claimed that on the Russo-Turkish War Wolseley insufficiently used them.

Forbes returned to the relationship of correspondents and military authorities in his article 'My Campaign in Pall Mall'.<sup>14</sup> He claimed that newspapers "dread a war because of the huge expense it entails without adequate compensation": a doubtful claim, but made repeatedly by journalists. He stated that now controls had ended the war correspondent with British forces, replacing him by the war reporter enslaved by censorship. Forbes favoured this since war correspondence could inform the enemy and in European war the alternatives were news or victory. Before such controls, the correspondent had advantages - he could "stir the nation with revelations of maladministration" and might win "fleeting fame" - but if he were independent not sycophantic, officials treated him insolently, contradicted his reports and impugned his veracity. Officials usually had the advantage and tended to be believed. Sometimes correspondents were vindicated, as were Russell in the Crimea and MacGahan in Bulgaria, but in other cases though correspondents were

correct, lying official denials were widely believed, as with Russell's reports of troops' misconduct in Natal and Forbes' own revelations in Cyprus. Moreover a correspondent who reported news contrary to public beliefs could be vilified by the public and press. In the 1882 Egyptian campaign a correspondent reported a British picket had panicked. In Britain public and press indignantly denounced him as "the vilest of calumniators" and his paper sacked him. Forbes claimed his conduct had been silly and unnecessary, since such incidents happened in all armies and were not worth reporting. Forbes had seen them in successive wars and knew of but did not report those in Zululand. The correspondent should not have "looked at events microscopically". Most of Forbes' article was on his claim to the Zulu War medal and his treatment by the War Office, which he claimed showed, "the tergiversations and tortuosities officialdom in its relations with the war correspondent". Thus Forbes, while accepting the present controls were necessary for great-power war, again attempted to vindicate correspondents, claiming that officials misrepresented them and deceived the public and that while correspondents should report the truth they should do so selectively, omitting unimportant events which the public, ignorant of war, could misunderstand. It was a tenable argument but a dangerous one, for omission could distort for propaganda, denying readers information on which to evaluate. Forbes, in the relatively free society and press, was apparently insufficiently aware of the danger of manipulation within the press.

In his 1891 articles 'A War Correspondent's Reminiscences' he described his experiences as a correspondent.<sup>15</sup>

He claimed that the Franco-Prussian War "brought about the revolution in the methods of war correspondence", beginning a new period in war correspondence. Previously it had been, because "pre-telegraphic", less arduous, and because of weapons' shorter ranges, less dangerous. He again emphasised - "pace Lord Wolseley" - his and other correspondents' hardships and dangers, and his own bravery, Ulundi ride and mentions in despatches. He claimed that correspondents endured more risks and had proportionately higher casualties than average soldiers, and cited correspondents' war deaths. He stated his desiderata for the ideal correspondent: languages, "a competent judge of warfare, conversant with all military operations", an instinct for coming battle, and ability to ignore fire and to judge a battle's result before it ended and so leave early with the news, and to ride exceptional distances and then write. The profession of war correspondent impaired the hardiest constitution and prematurely aged the correspondent, but was "of singular fascination". He described himself in 1892 as, "an invalid in quest of health...reduced to dodder about a mineral spring".<sup>16</sup> In his 1892 article 'War Correspondence as a Fine Art',<sup>17</sup> he stated that war correspondence as he had practised it had, after its "brief term" ended, with new controls and censorship. He agreed with them, preferring "victories to news"(216). He outlined the history of war correspondence, emphasizing Russell in the Crimea and his saving the army there. In the Franco-Prussian War a few reporters achieved scoops by telegraphing and so, "revolutionised war correspondence in the Old World"(223). Thenceforth speed and organization were crucial: "In modern war



correspondence the race is emphatically to the swift...the best organiser of the means of expediting his intelligence, he it is who is the most successful man" (225). He described his own ingenuity and success in routeing his reports to England, and again his epic rides: for example, "during the four days I had ridden 280 miles in a heat as fierce as that of India, over tracks from which the dust rose so dense as to obscure the sun" (240).

Writing of war correspondence Forbes repeated certain themes, writing largely of his own experience and achievement and emphasising correspondents' dangers, hardships, drama and adventure. He portrayed himself and others of the élite as heroes, so differing from the pattern set by Russell and largely initiating "the adventurous school of war correspondents".<sup>18</sup> He again emphasised the importance for correspondents of speed, ingenuity, foresight, organisation and money in arranging communications and expediting reports. He praised correspondents and attempted to refute criticism of them. While criticising rivals as inaccurate and sensationalist, he claimed that correspondents seldom lied. His favourable portrayal minimised correspondents' rivalry and sharp practice. In the 'seventies and 'eighties he argued against control and censorship, asserting the benefits of unrestricted reporting: revealing faults, causing reforms, stimulating, recruiting and providing data useful to officers. Later he accepted the need for control and censorship in European war to prevent the enemy gaining information, here agreeing with the trend of opinion among the military authorities and among correspondents including

Russell. He saw war correspondence as changing with circumstance and the period of his success as a temporary phase, characterised by the telegraph and minimal control and censorship. He stated that war correspondence continued because of public demand, and asserted the influence of the press on the public. He reaffirmed the role of the correspondent as an expert and critic, and assumed he should support his country's forces and stimulate "martial ardour", should reveal faults and failures but not attack the army or war. A man of action rather than reflection, he did not write about the emphasis and explicitness with which a correspondent should report the horrors of war, but accepted the conventions of his age. As a leading correspondent he was accepted as a spokesman for his profession. The positive, heroic image of the correspondent which he presented reinforced the orthodoxy and was repeated in articles and books on the press and on correspondents. He was important in shaping attitudes not only to war but also to war correspondents and in reaffirming the credibility, established earlier by Russell, of their portrayal of war.

## 8. FORBES ON WAR CORRESPONDENCE: NOTES

1. William Maxwell, 'The War Correspondent in Sunshine and Eclipse', Nineteenth C. (Mar 1913)608-23; Mathews 241-53.
2. Forbes et al, The War Correspondence of the "Daily News" 1877 (1878) 225.
3. Ib 427.
4. JRUSI XXI (1877-8) 1065.
5. Preface, Glimpses.
6. Forbes to Russell, 13 July'99, quo Atkins II 220.
7. Quo Atkins II 221.
8. Memories 3-4.
9. Annual Register 1879; Roberts, Forty-one Years 372-5; David James, The Life of Lord Roberts (1954)94-6.
10. Forbes, 'War Correspondence and the Authorities', Nineteenth C. (Jan'80)185-96. Cf Forbes, 'Chelmsford'.
11. Viscount Melgund, 'Newspaper Correspondents in the Field', Nineteenth C. (Mar'80)434-42. Melgund (later 4th Earl of Minto, and Viceroy) had varied war experience and had been briefly a war correspondent. Cf Harness, 'Zulu Campaign'.
12. Souvenirs 274-5.
13. Ib 158-9.
14. Rp Barracks 307-28.
15. 'A War Correspondent's Reminiscences', Nineteenth C. (Aug, Sept'91), rp as Chapter I, Memories.
16. Memories 297.
17. 'War Correspondence as a Fine Art', Century Mag. (Dec'92, New York) rp as chapter X, Memories.
18. 'Melton Prior', DNB.

## 9. BIOGRAPHIES

Biography was among the oldest and most popular literary forms.<sup>1</sup> Victorians saw history largely as "the essence of innumerable Biographies", the achievements of the great. So they erected more commemorative statues than ever before or since, of Victorians and their historical heroes. As Olive Anderson, A.O.J. Cockshut and C.I. Hamilton have shown, Victorian biography was characterised by the presentation of its subjects as heroes, if sometimes flawed, and by hero-worship. From the time of the Crimea naval and military biographies identified Christianity with heroism and emphasised the Christian warrior hero, a concept with its heyday in the 'fifties and 'sixties though influential long after. Heroes fulfilled Victorian emotional needs. Contemporaries believed they inspired; and, as Hamilton has suggested, they comforted against anxieties aroused by religious doubt, social darwinism and foreign threats. Victorian biography varied much in subject, type and quality. Subjects varied from emperors to the poor and humble heroes of the Protestant sects and the temperance movement. One such was Billy Bray, the Cornish miner and Bible Christian preacher whose biography by F.W. Bourne, Billy Bray: The King's Son (1871) sold a thousand copies every month for thirty years.<sup>2</sup> Samuel Smiles wrote that, "The chief use of biography consists in the noble models of character...a book containing the life of a true man is full of precious seed".<sup>3</sup> Biographies were usually eulogistic, and often hagiographical and inspirational, both religious and secular:<sup>4</sup> the latter included Smiles' Self-Help (1859) and

other 'success' literature.<sup>5</sup> Their format and quality varied but few, like Edwin Hodder's "classic Victorian biography", the Life of Shaftesbury, achieved excellence.<sup>6</sup> Filial and uxorious biography sometimes falsified, as did 'Soapy Sam' Wilberforce's life of his father. Biographers were limited by current standards of reticence and decorum, which were most restraining from about 1840 to about 1875 then diminished.<sup>7</sup> Reticence and bias sometimes caused omissions: for example by Forster of Dickens' adultery or by Morley of Gladstone's flagellation. Biographies were often inaccurate. Parasitic on the large standard biographies were the many shorter plagiarised 'pot-boilers' of which Lady Carbury's Criminal Queens was typical.<sup>8</sup> The public's 'biographic appetite' continued, and biographies continued profitable. In the late 19th century there was a vogue for better, though still derivative, short biographies and publishers produced series, for example Macmillan's 'English Men of Action'. So many biographies were published as to arouse criticism. Edmund Gosse complained that, "there was unquestionably an excess, and even an abuse, in the habit of biography".<sup>9</sup>

Retired from war correspondence Forbes wrote more journalism and books, including five relatively short biographies. They were derivative and superficial, but expressed his attitudes: as Cockshut has written, "in biography it is the whole man who writes, with all his instincts, ideas and prejudices".<sup>10</sup> Forbes' first biography was Chinese Gordon rushed out in 1884 and admittedly compiled from others. He eulogised Gordon, placing him in

the tradition of Christian warrior heroes including Hedley Vicars, whose best-selling biography by Catherine Marsh helped establish the Victorian cult of the Christian warrior hero.<sup>11</sup> He praised Gordon's courage, example to his men, and his military studies. He commented that the art of war needed experience but that some exceptional commanders - including Napoleon, Sheridan, Skobeleff and Gordon - had an "innate genius for war". He condemned the Taiping rebels and the imperial officials. He condemned the Egyptian regime in the Sudan as cruel, corrupt and oppressive, and praised Gordon's achievement against the slave trade, his bringing peace and progress. He condemned the Mahdist regime for its slavery and oppression, contrasting the beneficence of Gordon's rule. He also criticised the "cliquism and favouritism" of British India. His book, restating the orthodox view of Gordon, was superficial, insufficiently critical, and failed to portray Gordon's complexity and motivation. Ignorant of most of the countries where Gordon served, Forbes' account, especially of the Sudan and Uganda, was simplistic and more favourable than Gordon's own assessment. Forbes again judged by moral criteria, and emphasised the warrior virtues of courage and devotion to duty. He expressed his patriotic and racial beliefs and, while not advocating extension of British rule, his condemnation of native rule could be read as implicit justification of the Empire. His emphasis on the Pall Mall Gazette's role was typical of Victorian belief in press influence. He included some comments from his own experience and military studies, but failed to analyse the "innate genius for war". He habitually ignored seapower,

and his comment on the Essex forts showed he still accepted the 1859 assumptions and was uninfluenced by the ascendant navalism. His book, competent hurried journalism, did justice to neither Gordon nor Forbes. It both expressed and reinforced the public adulation of Gordon and concern at his fate.

Macmillan's 'English Men of Action' were mostly the heroes of imperialist 'drum and trumpet' history, and Forbes was chosen to write on two heroes of that imperial epic the Indian Mutiny, Havelock and Campbell.<sup>12</sup> Havelock was adulated as a Christian warrior, the pre-eminent popular hero of the Mutiny.<sup>13</sup> Forbes compiled his Havelock (1890) from earlier biographies, adding his own comments. He praised Havelock's study of military history as contributing to his later victories: the art of war was "constructed out of innumerable instances of actual experience"(p7). He praised Havelock's "innate capacity for war"(ib), courage and concern for his men. In his biographies Forbes included much conventional campaign narrative, not specific on horrors and suffering and not attempting to communicate soldiers' experience: the written equivalent of the Victorian battle painting. He again condemned the mutineers' atrocities, justified British reprisals, praised British heroism and achievement, but noted that British soldiers looted and burned.<sup>14</sup> He emphasised regimental tradition, esprit de corps and morale, and noted that even fine troops could falter under fire, and the importance then of leadership. Though superficial and lacking insight and analysis, it was a vigorous narrative and was favourably reviewed. Forbes' Colin Campbell, Lord Clyde (1895) was similarly derivative

and eulogistic. He praised Campbell's bravery and minimization of casualties, partly by using artillery. He praised the good relations between officers and men in the old long-service army, and especially praised the highlanders. He continued to sympathize with the rank and file, to condemn those who maltreated or needlessly sacrificed them, and to praise those concerned for their welfare. He never saw the army or war exclusively from the commanders' and officers' viewpoints. He continued a continentalist, believing the Mutiny and other colonial campaigns held no lessons comparable with those of the Franco-Prussian War, which he most cited, or the Russo-Turkish War. The Times review suggested that Forbes' war experience helped his writing the book, but in fact the Mutiny was a different type of war from those he had experienced, and in writing on it he made little overt use of his experience. However his experience informed his perception and evaluation and increased his credibility. The two biographies were favourably reviewed, sold well, and reinforced existing attitudes to the Mutiny, the Empire, military heroes and war.

After 1871 Forbes continued to admire the Germans; a continentalist, the German army his exemplar.<sup>15</sup> Cassells, publishers of an extensive list including popular biographies and illustrated military histories, commissioned him to rush out a life of Kaiser Wilhelm I, William of Germany (1888).<sup>16</sup> It was adulatory, praising his courage under fire and his contribution to army reform, victories and unification. Forbes praised the German army system based on, "three great principles...short service, universal



obligatory service, and territorial service"(120), and its speed in mobilising huge armies. Danish and later French courage were insufficient against German military power, and to the Prussian army, "the use of victories was to teach it how to win other victories"(204). He emphasised the importance of transport, of the needle-gun against the Austrians and of artillery against the French. He stated that French republicans had believed in, "the delusion that republican institutions and untrained hordes of patriots" (282) could defeat the German armies. He wrote conventional campaign narrative, minimising and muting war's horrors and emphasising its glory and achievement. He emphasised the French cavalry's failure, despite courage, against German infantry. He praised Prussian conscription but, writing of 1848, noted one disadvantage: making an insurrection more dangerous because the insurgents had military training.<sup>17</sup> Yet he did not develop this, and believed the advantages of conscription outweighed it. Like the Realpolitiker Germans he emphasised the role of force in international relations. Prussia gained because its rulers prepared for war, a lesson some nations ignored, apparently believing the millenium was near: "They would have their millenium on the cheap - an aspiration of the folly of which time will sternly convince them"(163). However he ignored naval preparedness and, assessing Britain's contribution to Napoleon's defeat, he ignored seapower - despite the Armada tercentenary and the navalist agitation.<sup>18</sup> He showed his political conservatism and hostility to radicals and mobs - probably reinforced by the 'eighties London riots - and his identification with William and his values, in praising

William's suppression of the 1848-9 revolutionary movement. He condemned the Prussian Liberals, including "the Progressists, roughly equivalent to our Radicals"(133) for opposing the government's military policy. Unlike most British Liberals with their moralistic attitude to international relations, he accepted uncritically Bismarck's Realpolitik. His attitudes were indicated by predator and weaponry metaphors: for example, "the wolves...wrangled over the carcase" and "her sword was rusty in the scabbard".

William of Germany was derivative, superficial, lacking insight on William himself, and with unsubstantiated generalizations: not scholarship but competent journalism, sometimes perceptive on politics and war. He shared the Prussian rulers' militaristic values and expressed his tough-minded bellicism and rejection of the Cobdenite millenium. He warned of the decisiveness of force in international relations, the possibility of disastrous national and military deterioration as earlier in Prussia, and the necessity of military strength and preparedness. He again praised the warrior virtues, but warned they were inadequate without sufficient organization, strategy, matériel and numerical strength. He emphasised the crucial importance of Prussian weapon superiority, but ignored industry and finance in war, understated the importance of railways and, unlike Spenser Wilkinson,<sup>19</sup> almost ignored the General Staff. Again he functioned as a publicist contributing to the popularisation of continentalism and increasing defence awareness. He later praised William in his article 'Soldiers I have known' and there

described the Franco-Prussian War as, "the most memorable and most colossal conflict of the century".<sup>20</sup> It continued to dominate his military thinking.

#### 9. BIOGRAPHIES: NOTES

1. On Victorian biography largely from the biographies; Edmund Gosse, 'Biography' EB; Olive Anderson, 'The growth of Christian militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', EHR LXXXVI(1971); A.O.J. Cockshut, Truth to Life: the art of biography in the nineteenth century (1974); C.I. Hamilton, 'Naval Hagiography and the Victorian Hero', Hist.J. XXIII (1980). Victorian biography was pre-psychological. For an Edwardian implicit questioning of the Victorian warrior hero see 'The Sign of the Broken Sword' in G.K. Chesterton, The Innocence of Father Brown (1911). On heroes used as brand names e.g. Kitchener polish, Robert Opie, Rule Britannia (1985) 7.
2. (ed) W.J. Townsend et al, A New History of Methodism (1909) I 544.
3. Samuel Smiles, Self-Help (1859,1958) 350-1.
4. e.g. William Garden Blaikie, The Life of David Livingstone (1880).
5. A.J. Warner, 'Getting On - Past and Present', Makerere J. I (1958)1-7; Asa Briggs, Victorian People (1965)124-47; Kenneth Fielden, 'Samuel Smiles and Self-Help', Vic.Stud. XII (1968) 158-76.
6. Edwin Hodder, The Life and Works of the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury (1886).
7. Cockshut 32.
8. In Anthony Trollope, The Way We Live Now(1875) chapters, I,II,XI.
9. Gosse 954. Cf preface to Lytton Strachey, Eminent Victorians (1918) and 'Tradition in Biography', (ed) Julian Symons, A.J.A. Symons, Essays and Biographies (1969)1-10. For Wells's later condemnation of the Victorian "Great Man idea" v H.G. Wells, All Aboard For Ararat (1940) 66-8.

10. Cockshut 177.
11. Anderson 48. He also compared him to Sir Lancelot and Bayard: on Victorian medievalism and chivalry see Mark Girouard, The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman (1981).
12. On Forbes' Indian experience and knowledge of the Mutiny: Forbes, Souvenirs 51; Camps 179-95, 271-97; Times 31 Mar 1900; Brown, 'Treatment' 135.
13. Smiles 377; Anderson 49-50.
14. Forbes criticised the Army Book of the British Empire for claiming the army's tradition was of not pillaging, 'The Bogus Apotheosis of the British Army', Contemp.R. LXV ('84) 524.
15. On British attitudes to Germany see Paul M. Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914 (1980).
16. On John Cassell see DNB, EB, B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (1971); publications from Selection from Cassell & Company's Publications (1888).
17. William of Germany 89.
18. ILN (21 July '88) 41-54, 60; Annual Register 1888 II 37; Arthur J. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power (1940) 131-3.
19. Henry Spenser Wilkinson, The Brain of an Army (1890); Thirty-Five Years 1874-1909 (1933) 120-2; Jay Luvaas, The Education of an Army (1965) 259-61.
20. Memories 336.

## 10. FICTION AND MINOR ARTICLES

In the 1860s Forbes wrote for his London Scotsman a serial story, published in 1871 as a three-volume novel, Drawn From Life. He used his Scottish boyhood and army experience, and the Mutiny experience of James Hollowell who as a private of the Ross-shire Buffs (later the Seaforth Highlanders) had won the V.C. at Lucknow, then worked as a commissionaire, and whom Forbes paid five shillings per weekly two-hour interview.<sup>1</sup> The novel was a romantic melodrama. The conventional handsome hero Hector MacDonald, son of a highland laird, quarrelled with his father, enlisted in a light dragoon regiment, served heroically in the Mutiny, married his sweetheart and inherited the family estate. It was poorly-written, verbose and with cardboard characters. His hero had the warrior qualities Forbes admired and later asserted as necessary for British fitness for war: endurance and courage. Expressing dominant values the hero was a landed gentleman and the caddish villain, Fitzloom, a parvenu with industrial wealth.<sup>2</sup> Possibly responding to the Victorian taste for vicarious 'low life', Forbes' portrayal of army life emphasised the nastiness, brutality and injustice, the antithesis of respectability: brutish, foul-mouthed soldiers; corrupt, bullying tyrannical N.C.O.s: unjust floggings, "drink and low debauchery". He was limited here, as with Fitzloom, by the standards of literary decorum.<sup>3</sup> He described the hardships of wives married off the strength. Yet he also showed that for some the army provided an adventurous, satisfying life. Describing the Mutiny Forbes, as in his war correspondence, was not explicit or detailed on its horrors. He emphasised the

mutineers' evil and atrocities, the justification for British reprisals, and the British troops' yearning for revenge: "There has been nothing like the Indian Mutiny in modern warfare. It was not war, it was extermination".<sup>4</sup> He also described British troops drunk and looting. His portrayal was sufficiently true to the British participants' perception for Havelock to state it must have been written by a deserter.<sup>5</sup> Later he condemned the inefficiency and unhelpfulness of officials at the War Office which he called, in Dickensian terminology, the Circumlocution Office.

Forbes portrayed the nastiness of rankers' lives and the dangers of war, but also war's attractions: war as exciting, adventurous, heroic and justified. His portrayal of the Mutiny was familiar, but his novel was exceptional because it was about the rank and file, by one of them.<sup>6</sup> His only novel, it was unsuccessful: "this poor hand-to-mouth story which has long sunk into deserved oblivion".<sup>7</sup> He omitted it from that mirror of vanity and deception, Who's Who. Nevertheless in it he stated values and themes which continued throughout his oeuvre, and he later cannibalised it for short stories for magazines. Moreover it influenced Grant of the Morning Advertiser to employ him: like Stephen Crane and Kipling, Forbes became a war correspondent because of his war fiction.

Responding to the demand for magazine fiction and articles, Forbes wrote miscellaneous pieces largely on military themes, some of which he reprinted in book form.<sup>8</sup> In them he stated, sometimes hyperbolically, his opinions,

including his contempt for London militia officers: "the Colonel Commandant would be a soap-boiler engaged in the active duties of his odoriferous profession...a militia commission has always been more or less a useful item of stock-in-trade to a man living by his wits".<sup>9</sup> He criticised field days as inadequate preparation for war. He criticised the 'Ring' and recent unjustified awards and promotions: "There is a fortunate young gentleman in the service to-day (he is in 'the ring', of course) who has three medals for as many campaigns, the C.B., the Khedive's Octopus, and the Osmanlie, who has been the recipient of two steps in rank by brevet, and who has never seen a shot fired in anger".<sup>10</sup> Again he was not explicit and detailed on the horrors of war, and used the conventional language of battle narrative. Similar to the popular genre of future-war fiction was one of his longest stories, 'Absit Omen!' about the anti-British villain L'Estrange, a Russian agent who helped the Afghans, Boers, Arabi and the Mahdi: he, "mainly planned and conducted the annihilation of Hicks Pasha's ill-fated army".<sup>11</sup> He worked with Oronzha, a leader of "anarchical socialism...the great International organization which has for its aim the fundamental subversion of the political and social order".<sup>12</sup> L'Estrange instigated a mutiny in the British army - promising soldiers, "a fine free-and-easy régime of lawlessness and unlimited drink".<sup>13</sup> However the mutiny failed and he was killed. It stated Forbes' belief that bad characters in the army could be used for subversion, and in the superiority of long- over short-service soldiers. He especially criticised short-service N.C.O.s, "flashy young short-service men, 'jumped-up non.-coms'", dissipated and discontented.<sup>14</sup>

His account of L'Estrange's role in colonial wars expressed current racial attitudes.

Forbes wrote for the market, when popular fiction was still dominated by Dickens: Kipling called Forbes' fiction, "watered Dickens and water".<sup>15</sup> In it were social rise and fall, sadness and sentimentality, moral imperatives, good and evil. He wrote largely from his experience of Scotland and the pre-Cardwell army, and of the two wars which dominated the news when he was young, the Crimea and the Mutiny. As a fiction-writer he lacked creativity, insight and literary skill, and produced largely cardboard-charactered melodramatic potboilers. His portrayal of the army continued the message of his articles and novel: the unpleasantness and injustice of rankers' lives; the glory and heroism of war and, implicitly, that it was justified; the danger from treachery, and the qualities necessary for fitness for war. He again asserted the traditional values of loyalty, honour, duty and courage. He reinforced British views of the Mutiny. He portrayed the post-Cardwell army as easier and inferior to the old army, and short-service soldiers as inferior to long-service veterans. A continuing theme was the abuse of power in a hierarchy, and the vulnerability of the hierarchical inferior.<sup>16</sup> He showed what few middle-class readers realised, N.C.O.s' power over private soldiers. He provided a truer picture of the rank and file than did Kipling with his quasi-officer perspective. Forbes anticipated Kipling in portraying sympathetically other ranks, and contributed to the increased, if still ambivalent, late 19th century popularity of the army.



Though he was sometimes opportunist and though he changed his views on some issues, notably firepower, and apparently became more conservative and concerned with internal and external threats, nevertheless there was, through continuing themes and values, a basic unity throughout his oeuvre. His fiction, its credibility enhanced by his reputation as a war correspondent, complemented and reinforced the message of his other writings. Fiction, even poorly-written and implausible, may be influential, and his fiction was significant for its contribution to the forming and reinforcing of popular attitudes to the army, war and defence.

He also wrote slight 'sketches' - reportage, fiction and a mixture of both - on various subjects including London low life, and aspects of the Empire. The former were characterised by hostility to the residuum, portrayed as repulsive and deserving poverty: a reaffirmation of widely-held middle-class views.<sup>17</sup> He did not explicitly connect this to his concept of fitness for war, though showing those who were unfit. That he did not, unlike later social-imperialists, see poverty as undermining military strength and so requiring reforms was probably because like most of his generation - before Booth, Rowntree and the Boer War - he did not realise the extent of poverty and physical unfitness and assumed that if necessary Britain could raise a physically adequate mass army. His articles expressed his tough-mindedness and conservatism. His articles on India further reinforced the accepted view of the Mutiny, and those on Burma condemned Thibaw's massacres and praised British rule.<sup>18</sup> He showed the Empire providing opportunity for

young men.<sup>19</sup> His writings were implicit imperialist propaganda though, unlike Steevens' later, an imperialism of acceptance rather than assertion. Indicative of his priorities, his articles on the Empire were much shorter and inferior to those on the Franco-Prussian and Russo-Turkish wars.

From the 1860s he wrote for popular periodicals various short, slight, dogmatic articles on military topics, largely repeating themes from his other writings and asserting the qualities necessary for war. He wrote retrospective articles on the wars he had reported, reinforcing the message of his war correspondence. For example, 'Soldiers I have known' showed the qualities he valued in a commander: courage, strategic and tactical capability, and inspirational leadership.<sup>20</sup> His articles on colonial war emphasised British heroism.<sup>21</sup> He wrote, for example, of a young officer, "a few months later, among the bloody embers of the Residency at Cabul, he was himself to die, confronting to the last, with the calm, cool smile on his young English face, the fierce surge of the maddened fanatic horde".<sup>22</sup> It was a classic image of imperial war, portrayed visually by Caton Woodville and others. He also wrote derivative, unscholarly short 'popular' historical articles, again asserting the military virtues and presenting battle as heroic and glorious.<sup>23</sup> He had excelled as a war correspondent, and was a competent military polemicist. Yet he had neither the informed intelligent clear thinking of G.S. Clarke nor the intuitive insight of Orwell later. Forbes seldom went beyond the reporter's habit of writing ad hoc and rushing

copy, to scholarly thorough research. His work varied much in quality, and even potboiler journalism revealed his attitudes and reinforced his message. His message continued, in his worst work as in his best.

#### 10. FICTION & MINOR ARTICLES: NOTES

1. F.W. Walker, The Seaforth Highlanders (nd)75; O'Moore Creagh & E.M. Humphries, The V.C. and D.S.O. (nd) I 41; Forbes, Souvenirs 51-2. Forbes later also wrote Scottish short stories e.g. 'A Hill Story', Memories.
2. Cf Tess of the D'Urbervilles; Martin J. Wiener, English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980 (1981).
3. Cf W.M. Thackeray, 'Preface' to The History of Pendennis (1850); My Secret Life; Richards 26,46-8,197-202; Skelley 25,54-7.
4. Drawn From Life (1871) II 170.
5. Souvenirs 52.
6. Another was Robert Blatchford, Tommy Atkins of the Ramchunders (1898).
7. Souvenirs 52.
8. Some were cannibalised from Drawn From Life e.g. 'On the line of march', Glimpses; 'How "the Crayture" got on the strength', Barracks; 'The Fate of "Nana Sahib's Englishman"', ib. He also attempted other genres e.g. the sea-stories, 'The Story of the Megaera', Soldiering, and 'A Yarn of the "President" Frigate', Barracks.
9. 'Jellypod; alias the Muleteer', Barracks 90.
10. Ib 107. Medals were a sore point with Forbes: see 'My campaign in Pall Mall', Barracks.

11. 'Absit Omen!', Barracks 256. Anarchists and revolutionaries were then a theme of popular fiction e.g. George Griffith, The Angel of the Revolution (1897); Olga Romanoff (1894); E. Douglas Fawcett, Hartmann the Anarchist (1893); William Le Queux, The Great War in England in 1897 (1894).
12. Ib 260.
13. Ib 261.
14. Ib 263.
15. Kipling, Light that Failed 135.
16. e.g. 'Flogged', 'A Deserter's Story', Soldiering. Cf the rankers' grievances stated in Forbes' and others' 1860s articles: see, 'Private Dragoon' section.
17. e.g. 'Christmas-eve among the beggars', Soldiering; 'Christmas Night in very common lodgings', Glimpses.
18. e.g. 'Reverencing the Golden Feet', Camps; 'The Cawnpore of to-day', ib; 'The Lucknow of to-day', ib.
19. e.g. 'Doughtown Scrip', Souvenirs.
20. Memories 333-68.
21. e.g. 'Bill Beresford and his Victorian Cross', Barracks.
22. 'Christmastide in the Khyber Pass', Souvenirs 323.
23. e.g. 'The Battle of Balaclava', Contemp.R. (Mar '91); 'The Military Courage of Royalty', ib (Feb '93); 'The Inner History of the Waterloo Campaign', Nineteenth C. (Mar '93).

## 11. CONCLUSION

After varied failure Archibald Forbes suddenly in 1870 achieved success and fame as a war correspondent, by merit: by initiative, hard work and the quality of his product. His war correspondence deserved its praise. From 1870 to 1879 he consolidated his reputation as an outstanding war correspondent. His success was made possible by the Daily News' prosperity, to which his reports contributed, which financed his assignments and expensive telegraphing, and it resulted largely from his character and professional qualities. He could socialise and gain useful contacts, respect and affection from officers and journalists though - proud, truculent and critical - he also made enemies. His success came from his expertise, from soldiering and military studies, his ability to write quickly, under adverse condition, clear, vivid and dramatic copy, and his securing - by ingenuity, subterfuge, telegraphing and exceptional rides - its quick despatch to London. His celebrity resulted also from his courage under fire and especially his epic rides, publicised by the press and by his lectures. He fitted the age: there was "the public craze for 'news'"<sup>1</sup> especially of war, and adulation of heroic exploits. His success was not due to fundamental originality. The pattern of his and other war correspondents' careers had largely been set by Russell, who established the concept of the war correspondent as celebrity, himself newsworthy, and as military pundit and controversialist: the public expectations from which Forbes profited. Forbes' methods - telegraphing and otherwise expediting his reports - were, as he admitted, mostly not

original, but followed American journalists. His success was rather because he adapted, and excelled. His originality was in, more than any other British correspondent, establishing the concept of the war correspondent as adventurer and hero.

The Franco-Prussian War transformed his career, and was apparently the decisive influence on his military thinking, establishing his continentalism and admiration for German military theory and practice. Success as a correspondent enabled him to publish signed articles on military subjects, further publicising himself and his opinions, and reaching influential readers. He was a prolific journalist and the quality of his work varied much. His reporting and his articles in the serious reviews were usually of high quality, but he also produced much inferior hack work, non-fiction and fiction. His achievement as a war correspondent gave credibility to his articles, but his hack work later diminished his reputation and contributed to the coolness of much of the obituaries. He became possibly judged too much by his pot-boiling sketches which he reprinted, and insufficiently by the review articles which he did not reprint.

An evaluation of Forbes should consider his qualifications as a reporter and as a military expert and his achievement, both intrinsically and in its results. When in 1870 he began war-reporting he was unusually well qualified, better than Russell when he went to the Crimea, or G.W. Steevens when he went to Thessaly. He had experienced soldiering though not battle, talked to combat veterans and

read military history and theory. He was tough, a good rider, and had the qualities of an effective reporter. As a war correspondent he gained acquaintance with commanders and other officers, and observed the varied aspects of armies in the field including weapons, transport and hospitals. He experienced battle, under fire. No correspondent could witness an entire war or an entire battle, and the scale of the Franco-Prussian and Russo-Turkish wars meant that he missed much, though he also witnessed much. In smaller-scale colonial war he saw proportionately more. At Ulundi, for example, standing on a wagon he could see most of the battle. He undoubtedly did experience battle, as was abundantly corroborated including by mention in despatches: had he falsely claimed experience his rivals and enemies would have exposed him, as later correspondents exposed Lieutenant Wagner of the Reichpost. Though he was criticised as self-advertising, arrogant and bad-tempered, no-one impugned Forbes' battle experience, or his courage.

Was he more than a reporter? Was his implicit claim that was a military expert, justified? He had served in the ranks and he read British and continental military history and theory. He knew the British, German and Russian armies and, less well, the French, Spanish and Turkish. He had extensive varied war experience: great-power and colonial; all-arms battles, siege and trench warfare, dressing stations and field hospitals. However - like the contemporary military publicists Dilke, Arnold-Forster - he was not officer or staff trained and had not commanded troops in battle. Though brave and risking death in battle, experiencing much

greater danger than line-of-communication and service troops, his own experience of battle differed in kind from that of front-line combatant soldiers.<sup>2</sup> As a correspondent he had options denied them and significantly less risk of death or wounding. Correspondents were not in the most dangerous positions, for example with infantry attacking trenches, but watched from a distance. If danger increased a correspondent, unlike a soldier, could decide to leave; he was paid to report not to die. He could weigh the odds and choose the danger he faced. Occasionally correspondents made themselves conspicuous and drew enemy fire - like St. Leger Herbert of the Morning Post, shot in his red jacket at Abu Kru in 1885, or Steevens with his white pony at Elandslaagte - but Forbes did not. Possibly with a regular's distaste for "tinker's mufti" he did not affect the military style of Villiers or R.H. Davis, but dressed as a Scottish gentleman travelling abroad, in homespun tweed and tam-o'-shanter and so was inconspicuous relative to soldiers and especially officers. Experience alone does not bring expertise: like Frederick the Great's pack mule a much-experienced person may remain ignorant. The military expert, the analyst and commentator, needed more than knowledge and experience. He needed receptivity and ability to learn from evaluate data and experience; judgment, proportion and informed imaginative insight, ability to see the wood for the trees, to select priorities and goals, to perceive and concentrate on essentials, to see specific problems in the context of their whole. Forbes had knowledge and experience: did he have these further qualities?



Forbes achieved success and fame by his qualities as a war correspondent, including his ability to obtain information and to write clearly, vividly and dramatically, his willingness to criticise where he believed it necessary, and his relatively high degree of honesty and objectivity. As a military commentator he had the qualities of his war correspondence. He was experienced, mature, had long studied his subject and continued to read on it, and so was able to make comparisons and draw data from military history and from earlier campaigns he had witnessed. While he admired great commanders, he refused to kowtow to rank or official status and was sufficiently independent-minded and undeferential to criticise a viceroy, senior officers such as Chelmsford and Wolseley, officials in Britain and India, and official or quasi-official publications including the official history of the Sudan campaign and the Army Book of the British Empire. He had moral values, a heritage of the manse, by which to judge, even if sometimes his judgments distorted his view of his subject. He was willing, despite his loyalties and preferences, to state the faults of those with whom he identified: for example, Russian faults in the Russo-Turkish War, and British soldiers' pillaging in former wars. He was not always consistent, and some of his opinions fluctuated over time: for example on flogging, Wolseley, firepower, cavalry and the British authorities' awarding of honours.

A continuing problem for a journalist reporting defence and war is obtaining secret "inside information" and concealing his sources. For Forbes this was a minimal problem. He established good relations with officers and did

not prematurely reveal information and jeopardise his military hosts' goodwill. He reported wars in which officers wanted a favourable press and did not consider him a security risk. In the Franco-Prussian and Russo-Turkish wars senior officers gave him information. In the colonial campaigns he reported there was little need for secrecy or for journalists to obtain inside information. He received information from officers but though this facilitated his reporting it was not crucial. By chance he was never in war in a position - like that of Charles Williams on the Gordon Relief Expedition - of obtaining from soldiers crucial controversial confidential information. Though he criticised Russian faults they accepted this, possibly partly because information harmful to one group within the army could be used by a rival group. When he criticised Chelmsford, it was not from secret information. Forbes' one Russellian muck-raking success was his revelation of the situation in Cyprus. There he used information from military personnel but it was so widely known on Cyprus as to be no secret and not require concealment of sources. Forbes was selective in his criticism: for example, he did not criticise the faults of the force he accompanied in the Afghan War.

Forbes' achievement resulted from his qualities, but he also had faults and limitations which became more apparent in his articles than in his war correspondence, and which flawed some of his work. In part his faults derived from his qualities as a journalist, and from his own character. Though he studied military history and theory he never acquired the scholar's attitude: the thoroughness, the

willingness to take time over research and to take into account other versions and interpretations even if they did not agree with his own. He had a high opinion of his own views, which tended to his disregarding others' inconvenient views. Like Carlyle he had the Victorian fault of opinionating dogmatically from inadequate data. He tended to superficiality, insufficiently questioned, investigated and analysed, and sometimes exaggerated and distorted. He ignored data that did not fit his case and usually did not name his sources or others who had contributed to the particular controversy. Occasionally he apparently wrote for effect rather than from conviction. Nevertheless his writing was usually competent journalism and his comment often valid and prescient, but he lacked the insight and originality of a great writer. His work as a military commentator lacked the quality of that of G.S. Clarke or Spenser Wilkinson. Lacking the advantages of high-placed friends, influence, social status or official position, Forbes was a proud self-made man who achieved eminence by merit. A repeated theme of his writings and lectures was self-advertisement: insistence on his achievement, experience and expertise. He was proud to be a correspondent and repeatedly defended correspondents against their critics. He asserted their hardships, dangers and achievements and claimed that they benefitted the army and the country. They caused reforms, and provided information from which officers could learn.

Forbes knew war, battle and the wounded. He had studied military history and theory and talked to veterans of varied wars. Always proud of his service as a private

soldier, he never saw war exclusively from the commander's or officer's viewpoint, praised commanders who tried to prevent unnecessary casualties and condemned those who unnecessarily sacrificed their men. He took a narrow, un-Clausewitzian view of war, usually restricting himself to its conduct, not its causes, aims and politics. His view of war was apparently essentially formed by the Franco-Prussian War, the war on which he wrote most and which he most often cited. It established his continentalism, to which he continued to adhere though in later years continentalism waned among officers and other military commentators. The Prussian army remained his exemplar and great-power war his standard. His continentalism limited him as a military commentator. Though proud of his personal independence he was intellectually too dependent on, and uncritical of, German orthodoxy: in his later years to the exclusion of his own experience of the Russo-Turkish War. Though he had reported the Carlist war and colonial campaigns, he relatively seldom cited them, and he dismissed colonial war as irrelevant to great-power war. He praised the warrior virtues of heroism, courage and discipline, and condemned cowardice. He claimed that with leadership, discipline and group-cohesion, even the cowardly could function effectively in battle. He emphasised the importance of morale, of "fire-discipline" and of acceptance of casualties. Though he wrote the conventional language of campaign narrative and was not specific or detailed on such subjects as wounds, showed war as horror, suffering and destruction, yet this did not dominate his writing on war. His writing on war complemented and reinforced, not contradicted, the images of the special

artists and the studio-based battle painters: the symbiotic relationship between war writer and artist was epitomised in his relationship with Villiers. He tough-mindedly accepted the evils of war and the necessity for soldiers to overcome them, by the warrior qualities he so admired, in order to win victory. His was a traditional view which accepted war - though he condemned some particular wars, notably the Afghan wars, as unnecessary and wasteful - and that war was nasty. War was a test which those with superior military qualities won. However though they might also be morally superior, as the Germans over the French, this was not necessarily so, for he believed the Russians morally superior but inferior as soldiers to the barbarian Turks. He was tough-minded on the nature of war but also sentimental on its human cost: the effect of a soldier's death on his sweetheart, family and friends. He considered the qualities of a great commander: strategic ability, leadership, courage, concern for his men's lives, study and knowledge of military history and theory, and what he termed innate genius for war.

He considered some of the military controversies of his day, and his views on them shifted over time, within the parameters of his continentalism. During and after the Franco-Prussian War he emphasised morale as against matériel. Then impressed by the Russo-Turkish War and especially the defence of Plevna, he argued the dominance of firepower, especially entrenched firepower, and the ineffectiveness of infantry assault and cavalry charge against it. Later, agreeing with continental orthodoxy, his opinion again shifted and he emphasised morale and the possibility of successful

infantry and cavalry attacks. His 'Warfare of the Future', emphasising firepower and the futility of assault, was exceptional though, lacking a time-scale, possibly not inconsistent. In his defence thinking a man of the 'sixties and 'seventies, influenced by his continentalism he ignored the navy and sea-power.

Forbes was primarily a reporter of war, and largely of his own impressions and experiences of it - he noted that correspondents tended to undervalue what they had not witnessed - and this apparently flawed him as a military analyst and commentator. The core of war news was battle, and he saw war primarily as battle. He realised other factors, such as mobilization were important but, despite his father-in-law, tended to understate them. He expressed minimal awareness of the role in defence and war of finance and industry: for example, of the extent to which German industrial development contributed to victory in 1870. Like his contemporary Dickens and unlike some of the younger late Victorian writers - Kipling, Wells and Steevens - Forbes was not thrilled by machinery and technology. He accepted and used railways, as he did telegraphs, but, a countryman and cavalryman, was more interested in horses. He portrayed war as drama, especially the drama of battle and - unlike Steevens with the Sudan Military Railway - saw no drama in railways. He understated the role in war of transport and communications. Despite his extensive reading and his awareness of the variety of factors affecting war, he was too limited by his own experience to see war as a whole, in proportion. He was a reporter of battle rather than an analyst of the totality of war.

Forbes' view of the army was shaped by three factors: his own experience, his continentalism and his increasing conservatism and pessimism. His early articles, written during and shortly after his own service, concentrated on the faults and disadvantages of the conditions of rankers and their families and implicitly favoured reform. His continentalism caused him to evaluate the British army by the standard of continental armies and especially his exemplar, the German army. He alleged the inadequacy of the British army for great-power war and the insufficient quality of recruits. The present soldiers were inferior to those of the old long-service army, and their soft treatment contributed to their inadequacy. He did not generalise about the quality of British officers but condemned the failings of specific commanders. Usually unconcerned with details of matériel, he favoured practical inconspicuous uniforms and equipment as taking less of soldiers' time and more effective for battle. He stated that the British army was not truly voluntary since recruits were compelled by poverty. He favoured conscription but did not overtly advocate it, presumably because of his connection with the Daily News and because he believed it politically unacceptable. He condemned existing short service and advocated a dual army with separate home and imperial forces. He criticised British unit favouritism, notably by Wolseley, but himself especially praised his compatriots, the highlanders. Though identified with no group in the army, his views agreed in part with those of the traditionalists and in part with those of Roberts and his followers. Though he worked for a reform-minded paper, he himself did not usually

advocate reforms. He offered criticism and diagnosis rather than proposals.

As a correspondent Forbes worked for the leading Gladstonian paper and he continued friendly with its fervently Gladstonian general manager, J.R. Robinson. Later he wrote for periodicals of varying politics, including the Conservative Blackwoods. He asserted his independence of politics and that as a correspondent he was unconcerned with political factors, only with military. Critics alleged in the controversy following the failure of the Nile Expedition, that he was the apologist of the Liberal ministers. During his years as a correspondent he tended to favour the Liberals, though he was sufficiently independent-minded to oppose party orthodoxy on occasion, for example by his criticism of Bulgarians. In his later years his published views became more pessimistic, critical of politicians, concerned with deterioration, internal and external threats, and more similar to those of the imperialist 'new' Right. Although he reported colonial wars, Indian famine and the Prince of Wales' visit to India, in his articles - possibly because of his continentalism or the influence of Daily News Little Englandism - he wrote relatively little on the Empire. He accepted British superiority and the Empire without the necessity to argue or assert it. He condemned the faults of native rulers and peoples - the misgovernment, oppression and atrocities of Indian mutineers, Taiping rebels, Turks and Mahdists - and by implied contrast justified British rule. Unlike G.W. Steevens later, he was not overtly a propagandist of empire. His was a mid-Victorian



imperialism of acceptance rather than assertion. Not imperialism but fitness for war was Forbes' message to his compatriots.

From 1870 onwards, through his varied writings, Forbes stated a message for his compatriots. As a young man he lived through the period of two wars which much impressed the British public, the Crimea and the Mutiny. The Mutiny was the first war he studied and wrote about. It differed from most 19th century colonial wars in that the British did not have a decisive weapon superiority. They believed they won by heroism, and Forbes shared this belief. The Franco-Prussian War, the first he experienced and reported, set the pattern of his military thinking and his message. It showed him heroism was not enough. Both sides had heroism, but the Germans had in addition a complex of qualities, an overall fitness for war, which won them victory. Forbes' message thenceforth, implicit through his military writings, was the necessity of Britain having such fitness for war.<sup>3</sup> Like Chesney's Battle of Dorking his military thinking was fundamentally a response to the Franco-Prussian War. In later years with further change and experience his emphases shifted, but his basic message remained constant. His message was fitness for war and his criteria were great-power war and the German army. Indicative of his lack of systematic military thinking, he did not in his writings, unlike Wilkinson and Dilke, question the role and priorities of the British army. His own experience primarily of "real war", great-power war, he assumed it as the army's ultimate purpose. His message was not apparent in his earliest

'Dragoon' writings but gradually, as he shed their blinkers of barrack immediacy, emerged through his war correspondence, articles, sketches, fiction and biographies, through warning and exemplars, specific instances and generalizations. He stated his premises in one of his later books, William of Germany when he stated that the Prussians won because they lived ready for war, with an "attitude of preparedness". His message derived from Scottish puritanism, traditional warrior virtues, Prussian qualities and the lessons of military history and experience. War fitness resulted from certain attitudes and values, and was essential for victory in war.

War fitness was a complex of interrelated qualities. They were necessary because of the possibility of war, which he assumed, and the nature of battle, which he described and evaluated. Battle was horrific, imposing great stress on combatants, and future battles would be worse, with immense casualties. Such casualties were necessary for victory. Yet the natural tendency of men in battle was to be cowardly and flee, and even brave soldiers became reluctant to attack after repeated casualties and failures. So war fitness included the qualities necessary for battle: "fire-discipline", courage, endurance, loyalty and willingness to accept casualties - the qualities of Prussian "formidability". They should be strengthened through esprit de corps and unit-cohesion - which he believed more important than individual heroism - training, leadership, example, and being "blooded" in battle. War fitness was largely not inherent, but had to be created and maintained. Yet battle qualities, though

crucial, were by themselves insufficient, as recent wars showed. Danes, French, Russians and Zulus all fought bravely, accepting heavy casualties, but lost. War fitness included intelligence and thought in preparation for war: planning, organization, mobilisation, matériel and medical facilities. Though Forbes fluctuated in his assessments of firepower and infantry and cavalry assaults, he continued to assert weapons as a key determinant sometimes, though not always, decisive in battle. Battle performance was largely determined by the combatants' basic physical, intellectual and moral qualities, so far fitness included health, physique, education, sobriety, initiative, responsibility, patriotism and "martial ardour" - qualities he perceived in the Prussians. Conversely, moral and intellectual failings harmed war fitness: corruption, inefficiency, insufficient education and professionalism, vice, drunkenness degeneracy and treachery. Traitors - a recurring theme of his fiction - and a subversive "unsafe element" also harmed war fitness. Such faults largely caused French and Russian military failures. War fitness included ability to resist the reductions and subversions of peace, as well as the stress of war, and should permeate the nation since the army was its product. Defence was a national duty which the British, unlike the Germans, neglected. Numbers were crucial in great-power war, and for full war fitness Britain required conscription. Untrained levies, however patriotic and brave, were inadequate. Forbes' war fitness, though having much in common with the conventional desiderata of the defence-minded, differed from them in its emphases and its totality. Though it shared values with militarism, it was not militarism, but

a tough-minded bellicism, an intelligent, motivated, prepared toughness. His message was largely muted and implicit because he worked for a Gladstonian paper, because he believed that to state it more strongly could be unacceptable and counterproductive, and because of his time-scale: writing from the 'seventies to the mid 'nineties he did not see an immediate danger, but a longer term necessity for adequate defence. For later writers, such as G.W. Steevens, there would be greater urgency.

Was Forbes a scholar to be taken seriously, or a lightweight polemicist? He was neither. He was an experienced, informed competent war correspondent with exaggerated pretensions of military expertise. He was not a scholar because, despite extensive reading, he was insufficiently thorough and accurate, took insufficient cognizance of others' contributions, and used too narrow a data-base for his generalizations. While lacking Dilke's ponderous Gradgrindery, he also lacked the informed insight of such military analysts as G.S. Clarke or Spenser Wilkinson, and was never a great military thinker. He was not just a polemicist: most of his work was not polemical. Polemic, however, is often significant. It is usually about important issues, draws public attention and, to be effective, requires construction of a strong case and presentation in vivid language. While polemic was only a small minority of his writing, Forbes was an effective polemicist. Was he lightweight? Evaluation is not easy: criteria are largely arbitrary and subjective. Much of his later journalism, miscellaneous reportage and sketches, were very lightweight,

though even lightweight journalism may be significant in revealing the journalist's attitudes and in projecting or reinforcing a message. His controversial military articles were journalism, shorter and less thorough than their subjects required, and of a lower standard than those of G.S. Clarke or Spenser Wilkinson. Nevertheless, within those limitations, they were informed, competent and argued a reasonable and sometimes excellent case: not great, but more than lightweight. Was Forbes lightweight in his impact? Reporting, like generalship, is partly luck. He never had the opportunity and influenced opinion and policy as did Russell with the Crimea or MacGahan with the Bulgarian atrocities. Nevertheless he did influence his contemporaries.

As a leading war correspondent, writing for a popular paper, and whose reports were extensively reprinted in other papers, and as a writer, whose experience gave credibility, in the respected and influential reviews, Forbes - although his reputation was diminished by the hack-work of his later years - helped shape attitudes towards war, defence, the army and specific military controversies, and influenced towards his ideal of war fitness. Contemporaries' estimation of his importance was indicated by the replies to his controversial articles, his writing for the prestigious Blackwoods and contemporary comment on him. He contributed to increased awareness and concern at the conditions of the rank and file and their families, the inadequacies of the existing short-service army, and the faults of commanders on specific controversial campaigns. Villiers claimed that

Forbes' publicising meritorious officers, notably Wolseley and Stewart, contributed to their fame and success: this was probable, though perhaps to a lesser extent than Villiers suggested.<sup>4</sup> As well as contributing to and exploiting the increased public concern and awareness of the army and defence, he reinforced traditional values: pride in the army and the traditional warrior virtues of discipline, courage and heroism. He was also the most widely-read publicist and populariser of continentalist military opinion. He probably increased recruiting, and contributed to the decline of Wolseley's reputation. For over twenty years he informed and influenced the Victorian public, though the extent of his influence can only be conjectured.

#### 11. CONCLUSION: NOTES

1. Wolseley, Pocket-Book 225.
2. On combatants' battle experience v Keegan, Ellis, Holmes; Ronald Lewin's review of Keegan, Times (17 June 1976) 16.
3. The section on war fitness is a conjectural interpretation of Forbes' writings.
4. Villiers, Personalities 251-2.

1. EDUCATION & EARLY JOURNALISM

Although popular interest in war was then probably at its zenith and war correspondents continued to be much admired, no war correspondent of the late 19th century achieved the pre-eminence of Russell or Forbes. For a few years, from 1896 to 1900 probably the best-known and most eulogised, and possibly most influential journalist, was George Warrington Steevens (1869-1900), who was intermittently a war correspondent, and sometimes wrote on defence. According to A.E. Douglas-Smith, "Before the First World War, he was usually considered the greatest of all war-correspondents and even since then has been described as 'in some ways the greatest of all journalists'".<sup>1</sup> He wrote for the largest-circulation daily newspaper, Harmsworth's Daily Mail, and through his articles in the reviews and his books he reached a readership that included politicians and other decision-makers. Lionel Abrahams wrote that he had, "endeared himself to hundreds of thousands of newspaper readers,"<sup>2</sup> and the Spectator obituary that, "no journalist, indeed no writer of recent times, had a wider or more varied circle of readers".<sup>3</sup> His writings were significant, though unquantifiable, factors in the formation of the public's attitudes to defence and image of war.

Steeven's career was continued success, earned by merit.<sup>4</sup> From "good, sound, middle-class stock", and a

"well-known nonconformist family"<sup>5</sup> he was born in 1869 in Sydenham and raised in Clapham, and attended private school.<sup>6</sup> He later claimed his boyish ambition was to be a greengrocer, but he won a scholarship to the City of London School: one of his obituaries claimed, "His career was an object-lesson in the usefulness of those educational endowments which link the humblest with the highest seats of learning in the country. If he had not been able to win scholarships he would have had to begin life as a clerk in a bank or a house of business".<sup>7</sup> The City of London School, under the headmastership of Dr Abbott and from 1883 in its new Embankment building, was one of the best schools in London: middle-class, meritocratic and progressive, and with impressive successes at the ancient universities. Steevens was there from 1882 to 1888 and distinguished himself in the classics, Sanscrit, games, fencing, debating and acting, and edited the school magazine. The senior boys were much interested in politics and in the early 'eighties Gladstonianism was strong among them.<sup>8</sup> In the school 'Parliament',<sup>9</sup> Steevens was a leading Radical and became Prime Minister: he advocated Home Rule, disestablishment and women's suffrage. He immensely impressed his contemporaries and won a succession of distinctions culminating in the captaincy of the school and, following Asquith earlier, a scholarship to Balliol, then under Jowett at the height of its Victorian pre-eminence. At Oxford he so continued his success that he was called 'the Balliol prodigy': firsts in Mods and Greats, proxime accessit for the Hertford Prize and, at the same time, a London B.A. with "first place" and "highest honours" then, despite starting the examination paper half an hour



after his rivals, a fellowship at Pembroke. The Spectator later commented, "Mr. Steevens's academic achievements fairly entitled him to be considered a prodigy, - the list of his honours and medals, scholarships and classes, is enough to take one's breath away."<sup>10</sup> He was also active in undergraduate societies, journalism and the exclusive undergraduate Liberal political club, the Russell Club, where he was secretary and regarded as "a great man". According to Lionel Abrahams, his friend at C.L.S. and Balliol, he had, "a complete, almost a fiery, sympathy with democratic principles".<sup>11</sup> At Pembroke he was, Henley wrote, "a rather gloomy and socialistic junior don".<sup>12</sup> He was befriended by Oscar Browning, always eager to help attractive young talent. Browning, politically radical, "though with a strong tinge of imperialism", in 1892 contested Worcestershire East against the dominant Chamberlain interest, and Steevens helped his campaign, acting as his secretary and editing an electioneering paper.<sup>13</sup>

From the 1860s the press expanded, journalists' pay and status improved, and more Oxford and Cambridge graduates entered journalism.<sup>14</sup> Jowett encouraged this and, as Steevens' Balliol contemporary J.H. Millar wrote in 1897, "a little army of Oxford men has within the last fifteen years invaded the realm of London journalism".<sup>15</sup> Steevens considered an academic career as a historian but decided instead on journalism. Helped by Oscar Browning, in 1893 he began his journalistic career by briefly editing a weekly paper for undergraduates, the Cambridge Observer which, "treated football matches with indifference, and

therefore...achieved no popularity in the University".<sup>16</sup> Befriended by Henley, imperialist, anti-decadent and also eager to help young talent, he wrote for the National Observer, where he became acquainted with H.G. Wells.<sup>17</sup> Again helped by Browning, later in 1893 he obtained employment on the Pall Mall Gazette. He wrote intermittently for Henley's New Review, its sales declining despite Wells' fiction, and also contributed to Blackwood's, M'Clure's and Harper's. As a young journalist he came into "an atmosphere of sound toryism" and his political attitudes apparently shifted to the right, though they were not explicit and were to be disputed after his death.<sup>18</sup> Through Henley he met a widow "many years his senior", Christina Rogerson. An old friend and allegedly former mistress of Dilke, she had been involved in the Crawford divorce case and possibly had instigated Mrs. Crawford's allegations in order to ruin Dilke.<sup>19</sup> She was an unusual choice for so eligible and so young a bachelor as Steevens. They married in 1894 and settled in suburban Merton.

The Pall Mall Gazette, Steevens' first experience of daily journalism, was in the 'nineties pre-eminent among the many London evening papers.<sup>20</sup> Following its 'eighties crusading sensationalism under Stead, from 1892 it was again Conservative, owned by the American millionaire W.W. Astor and edited by Harry Cust, Conservative M.P. "of legendary charms".<sup>21</sup> Valued as a humorist, Steevens wrote "the funny paragraphs" and also articles on foreign policy. In 1895 Cust and Astor quarrelled over editorial policy and the Venezuelan dispute, Cust patriotically opposing

Cleveland's intervention.<sup>22</sup> In December Cust and principal members of his staff, including Steevens, resigned. Abrahams wrote that Steevens' resignation was "dictated by a high sense of professional honour" and resulted in a period of small and precarious earnings.<sup>23</sup>

### 1. EDUCATION & EARLY JOURNALISM: NOTES

1. A.E. Douglas-Smith, The City of London School (1965)559.
2. B. Lionel Abrahams, 'Obituary', City of London School Magazine XXIV No.144 (March 1900)15. Abrahams, Steevens' friend at C.L.S. and Balliol, became a civil servant, Clerk to the Council to the India Office, and K.C.B.
3. Obit, Spectator (27 Jan 1900) 126.
4. My account of Steevens' life is largely from his writings and from obituaries in the Times, ILN, Spectator, C.L.S.Mag., AR; DNB, EB; Vernon Blackburn, 'The Last Chapter' in (ed) V. Blackburn, G.W. Steevens, From Capetown to Ladysmith (1900); W.E. Henley, 'Memoir' in (ed) G.S. Street, G.W. Steevens, Things Seen (1900); Max Pemberton, Lord Northcliffe (1922); Douglas-Smith. Recently historians have recognised Steevens' significance as an imperial publicist, but his works have not been reprinted nor has he been the subject of full historical study. My chapter is a case study of a late 19th century imperialist war correspondent and defence writer. For an American interpretation v H.J. Field, Toward a Programme of Imperial Life (Connecticut 1982) which I read after writing mine.
5. Like Wells and others of his generation, Steevens apparently early rejected his family's Christianity: it was absent from his writings, and apparently from his death.
6. Henley x, pace Field 123.
7. Obit. in Literature quo Blackburn 170. Arguably such scholarships harmed Britain by taking intelligent men from the economy into a classical education.

8. Douglas-Smith 275,347. Field 124 antedates the imperialism evident in later issues of the school magazine.
9. On amateur 'House of Commons' v Blanche Jerrold, 'On the Manufacture of Public Opinion', Nineteenth C. (June '83).
10. Anon. reviewing of Things Seen, Spectator (23 June 1900) 877.
11. Abrahams 17.
12. Henley xvi.
13. 'Browning, Oscar', DNB; H. Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910 (1967)183.
14. Frederick Greenwood, 'The Newspaper Press', Blackwood's (May '97); T.H.S. Escott, Masters of English Journalism (1911) 215,252,257,326.
15. Anon (J.H. Millar), 'Mr. Jowett and Oxford Liberalism', Blackwood's (May '97) 721.
16. Abrahams 17.
17. H.G. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography (1934, '69) II 532-4.
18. Henley xvii; Blackburn 164. Unlike his wife's writings, Steevens' did not express hostility to socialism.
19. Roy Jenkins, Sir Charles Dilke (1968)213-363; Betty Askwith, Lady Dilke (1969) 129-62; Field 141-2. Cf Frank Harris, My Life and Loves (1925, '66) 360: unreliable. After Stevens' death his widow published A Motley Crew (1901) which included stories of marital misery and betrayal, and denunciation of scandal-mongering. Her Pall Mall Gazette articles on social questions expressed attitudes similar to those in Steevens' articles: who influenced whom?
20. Koss 256-62. In 1894 London had five penny and four halfpenny evening papers.
21. Obit. of Lady Diana Cooper, Times (17 June 1986) 18; Cust was allegedly her father.
22. Koss I 337-40, Field 136.
23. Abrahams 18.

## 2. NAVAL WRITINGS

Influenced by the ascendant navalism and advised by Dilke whom he first met in 1894, Steevens wrote articles on naval defence, and used the time after his resignation from the Pall Mall Gazette to compile from them his first book on contemporary issues, Naval Policy (1896), apparently the only book he researched: a competent if largely unoriginal statement of navalist orthodoxy citing Colomb, Wilkinson and other navalists, which he admitted was "borrowings" and collation.<sup>1</sup> He claimed that Britain and the Empire, isolated and almost friendless, depended on naval supremacy and command of the sea. Italy was a feeble friend and Japan a possible ally,<sup>2</sup> and Britain would have to rely on her own naval strength; her weakness invited foreign aggression. He asserted battleship primacy and the importance of coal in war. He praised British naval personnel, criticised politicians, and asserted the importance of the economy and of public opinion in defence, "if only public opinion speaks loud enough"(204). He opposed abandoning the Mediterranean, and demanded a naval staff and the scrapping of obsolete vessels. He warned against foreign hostility, naval threat - from France, Russia, Germany and the United States - and possible surprise attack without declaration of war.<sup>3</sup> He warned that British naval strength was inadequate for war, and demanded a stronger navy. His message was essentially that of his fellow navalists and the recently established Navy League, and of the imperialists of the 'new' Right, and underlying his navalism was his social darwinism.

Naval Policy largely lacked any exceptional insight or prescience. He underestimated torpedo and submarine potential and ignored aircraft.<sup>4</sup> Advocating battleships having more and lighter guns, he underestimated the potential decisiveness of heavy guns and long-range gunfire.<sup>5</sup> Though prescient on United States naval potential, he underrated that of Germany, Russian and Japan. However, like Hozier and later Mackinder, Amery, Garvin and other tariff reformers, he saw the crucial long-term interconnection of economic and naval strength.<sup>6</sup> He considered the major naval controversies, usually accepting the majority opinion. In ignoring convoys he accepted Admiralty policy, unlike some officers and navalists, including Dilke, Wilkinson and G.S. Clarke:<sup>7</sup> Steevens was too prone to accept, unquestioning, orthodox opinion. On ships against fortification he stated what was, following Clarke's Alexandria report and his magnum opus Fortification, the received opinion.<sup>8</sup> Gibraltar and the Mediterranean were controversial navalist issues, with W.L. Clowes advocating withdrawal from both.<sup>9</sup> His Gibraltar proposal was attacked by Clarke and rejected by most navalists.<sup>10</sup> Most supported efforts, notably by Arnold-Forster, to improve the defences of Gibraltar.<sup>11</sup> On wartime withdrawal from the Mediterranean navalists were more divided, and again Steevens agreed with the majority. Navalists agreed that obsolete vessels should be modernised or scrapped, but Steevens was exceptionally emphatic, especially on their risking vital naval manpower: views shared by Fisher and underlying his later policy.<sup>12</sup> On the naval staff Steevens agreed with Wilkinson and the initial policy of

the Navy League.<sup>13</sup> His contemptuous hostility to politicians was widely shared by navalists and other defence publicists and reformers and by many serving officers including Wolseley and culminated in the denigration of Lansdowne during the Boer War.<sup>14</sup> It was characteristic of the late 19th and early 20th century 'new' Right, whose views Steevens largely held.<sup>15</sup> The efficacy of public opinion in influencing government naval policy was a repeated navalist theme and justification for navalist propaganda and for the Navy League and later the Imperial Maritime League.<sup>16</sup> H.W. Wilson, Steevens' Daily Mail colleague, was exceptional when in his Ironclads in Action - citing the Captain built, he alleged, despite Admiralty opposition, because of press and public pressure - he suggested that public opinion might harm the navy.<sup>17</sup>

Navy Policy was exceptional among Steevens' works. Competently researched and cogently argued, it showed his capability with a major subject and, unlike his later works, was not based on his chief journalistic asset, vivid descriptive writing. It also indicated his continuing limitations: a tendency to accept rather than innovate, question and investigate. To what extent this resulted from his character, school and Oxford training, or journalistic desiderata, is conjectural. As academic success and contemporaries attested, he was intelligent and able: but his was, apparently an orthodoxy-restating brightness, lacking originality and imagination.

He continued his navalist message with his anonymous article, 'A Naval Utopia' in the June 1896 Blackwood's.<sup>18</sup> He argued that the French admiral Fournier's proposed cruiser fleet could not defeat Britain, and reasserted battleship supremacy and command of the sea. Guerre de course would fail against Britain if the British had adequate morale to endure increased food prices, and shortages. Differing from his Naval Policy he advocated convoys, and he claimed the British could eliminate commerce raiders partly by depriving them of bases and supplies. His article, again citing Colomb and Wilkinson, was largely orthodox navalism and orthodox laissez-faire; arguably too accepting on the food issue. As elsewhere he presented morale, a form of toughness for the struggle, as crucial. Basically an unimaginative writer his forte was description and, unlike Wells, not what ~~might~~ ~~what~~ might be. He was vividly prosaic. He again failed to consider weapon development, and submarines and aircraft threatening battleship supremacy and British naval supremacy. He again insufficiently considered guerre de course and failed to consider the argument that it had never been attempted against a state as vulnerable to it as had become Britain.<sup>19</sup> Following government and Admiralty orthodoxy, he ignored possible government intervention on food supply. The Venezuela and Kruger telegram crises renewed concern for wartime food supply, with warnings, "many alarmist articles",<sup>20</sup> and demands for government stockpiling. The demands, resisted by the Admiralty, government and many navalists, aroused controversy.<sup>21</sup> Steevens ignored this, confident in the Navy and that



British fortitude would suffice to endure "a dear loaf" and shortage. In his writings he showed little concern for the lower classes.<sup>22</sup> He did not consider the effects on them of increased food prices and minimised the possible results - suffering, famine, unrest and insurrection - of even temporary diminution of food imports, despite such warnings as Yerburch's and H.W. Wilson's: Wilson warned that, "an empty belly knows not patriotism".<sup>23</sup> He failed to envisage the possible human disaster, unlike two later sensational works of future war fiction published in 1898, H.W. Wilson's and Arnold White's When War Breaks Out and Charles Gleig's When All Men Starve.<sup>24</sup> Steevens' brief dismissal, in his article as in his book, of the food issue, showed that despite his ability he was sometimes too accepting of official orthodoxy and too unwilling to consider dissenting proposals; and his lack of imagination, speculative thinking, and sympathy.

In his anonymous review article in the March 1897 Blackwood's<sup>25</sup> he again asserted the navalist orthodoxy of naval primacy in imperial defence and of command of the sea, warning that the "only barrier between the empire and its ruin was its Navy"(410). He criticised the Admiralty for insufficient reform, and British diplomacy for weakness, and claimed that recent naval increases resulted from public pressure. He praised the works of navalists including Philip Colomb, Mahan, Thursfield and Clarke: another example of navalists reinforcing each other.<sup>26</sup> He also favourably reviewed Naval Policy, indicating his view of his own work. He stated Steevens

was the least expert of those reviewed, his work was popularization and as such would probably succeed: candid, clear and well-written, "with ease and point, sometimes with humour. He is able to make his subject interesting" (p144). However, arguably this flawed his work as he relied too much on style and insufficiently on research. His April 1897 Blackwood's article 'The Navy Estimates' criticised Goschen and the Admiralty for lacking a definite naval policy based on possible enemy strength including increased Russian naval power.<sup>27</sup> British naval strength was inadequate with too few cruisers or seamen: the government was neglecting imperial defence. His message was again that of the Navy League and other navalists, and his criticism of the Unionist government showed his alignment with the 'new' Right, not with the Tadpoles and Tapers of party politics. All his naval writings, if basically unoriginal and flawed by omission, were knowledgeable, well-written and persuasive, and reinforced existing navalism. He continued navalist and his last despatch from Ladysmith praised the Navy.<sup>28</sup>

## 2. NAVAL WRITINGS: NOTES

1. Steevens, Naval Policy (1896) v. Steevens, relatively late to the genre, was able to draw on a corpus of of navalist writing including that of the Colombbs, Mahan, Brassey, G.S. Clarke, W.L. Clowes, J.R. Thursfield, H.W. Wilson, Spenser Wilkinson and Dilke, and Navy League publications; and a public roused by naval agitations from 1884. see e.g. 'The Truth About the Navy', Pall Mall Gazette (18 Sept '84)1-6; Annual Register 1884, 229-30. Beresford noted the necessary repetitiveness of navalist propaganda, C. Beresford, 'The British Fleet and the State of Europe' Nineteenth C. (Jan '89)11. On navalism and naval writing see Howard d'Egville, Imperial Defence and Closer Union (1913); The Invasion of England (1915); Arthur J. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power (1940); W.C.B. Tunstall, 'Imperial Defence, 1915-1870', C.H.B.E. II (1940); 'Imperial Defence, 1870-1897', ib III (1959); D.M. Schurman, The Education of a Navy (1965); B.M. Ranft thesis; James Morris, 'A view of the Royal Navy', Encounter (March 1973); Paul M. Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery (1976); W.M. Hamilton thesis.
2. A Japanese alliance had been suggested by Dilke in 'English Influence in Japan', Fortnightly R. (Sept. '76) rp in Greater Britain (1885 ad.)576-8, and in 'The Present Position of European Politics', Fortnightly R. (Mar '87)352, and by Wilkinson in The Nation's Awakening (1896)129,165-6, though not in their later works.
3. Surprise attack was a repeated defencist theme: see J.F. Maurice, Hostilities without Declaration of War (1883); John Gooch, 'The Bolt from the Blue' in The Prospect of War (1981).
4. Cf Steevens, 'The Great Review', D. Mail (27 June'97) rp Things Seen 215. Bomber aircraft were suggested by George Griffith, H.G. Wells and other writers of speculative fiction and futurology: see R.T. Stearn, 'Wells and War: H.G. Wells's writings on military subjects before the Great War', Wellsian (Summer 1983). Cf William Le Queux, The Great War in England in 1897 (1894)248-53.
5. On gunnery see Percy Scott, Fifty Years in the Royal Navy (1919); Anthony Pollen, The Great Gunnery Scandal (1980).

6. H.M. Hozier, The Invasion of England (1876)II 379-91; H.J. Mackinder, 'The geographical pivot of history', Geographical J. (1904); Britain and the British Seas (1906)350-2,358; J.L. Garvin, 'The Maintenance of Empire: A Study in the Economics of Power' in (ed) C.S. Goldman, The Empire and the Century (1905); L.S. Amery, 'Imperial Defence and National Policy' in *ib*; Kennedy, Antagonism 307-15.
  
7. A Nelson Seaforth (G.S. Clarke), The Last Naval War (1891)54-5; G.S. Clarke, Imperial Defence (1897)134-6; My Working Life (1927)110; H.W. Wilson, Ironclads in Action (1895)I 175; C.W. Dilke & Spenser Wilkinson, Imperial Defence (1897)37; Ranft thesis; Ranft, 'The protection of British seaborne trade and the development of systematic planning for war, 1860-1906' in Technical Change and British Naval Policy 1860-1937 (1977).
  
8. G.S. Clarke, 'The Lessons of the Bombardment of Alexandria', Times (17 Sept '83) *rp* Studies of an Imperialist (1928); Fortification (1890, 1907)231-47; A. Forbes, 'An American Criticism of the Egyptian Campaign', Nineteenth C. (Aug '94); Wilson, Ironclads I 96-7, 353-6.
  
9. W.L. Clowes, 'The Uselessness of Gibraltar', Fortnightly R. (Feb '93); 'The Millstone round the Neck of England', Nineteenth C. (Mar '95); 'Braggadocio about the Mediterranean: A Rejoinder'; *ib* (May '95). See also H. Elsdale, 'Should we hold on to the Mediterranean in War?' *ib* (Feb '95).
  
10. G.S. Clarke, 'England and the Mediterranean', Nineteenth C. (April '95); Working Life 125-6; S. Wilkinson, The Command of the Sea (1894)42-6, 87-8.
  
11. Steevens, Naval Policy 226; Mary Arnold-Forster, The Right Honourable Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster (1910) 126. Cf L.E. Naylor, The Irrepressible Victorian (1965) 142-3.
  
12. A.J. Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow I (1961) 38-40.
  
13. S. Wilkinson, The Brain of the Navy (1895); Thirty-Five Years (1933) 190-4.
  
14. e.g. Forbes' later articles; H.O. Arnold-Forster's articles in Nineteenth C. Nov '84, Jan '85, Sept '89, March '98, April 1900; *ib*, The War Office, the Army

and the Empire (1900)64-86; C. Beresford, The Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford (1914) I 139; An Old Soldier (W.F. Butler), The Invasion of England (1882)11-12; Seaforth 2,114; S. Eardley-Wilmot, 'The Navy and its Exhibition', J.R.U.S.I. (1891)547; J.K. Laughton (anon. review), Quarterly R. (1891)358-63; J.F. Maurice, The Balance of Military Power in Europe (1888)6-10; 36-46,92; National Defences (1897)23,35-9; Arnold White, Efficiency and Empire (1901) passim; H.W. Wilson, 'Are we misled about the Fleet?' Nineteenth C. (April 1900); Wilkinson, The Command of the Sea (1894)102-6; The Great Alternative (1894)5-17; The Nation's Awakening (1896)5,236-7,297; War and Policy (1900) passim; Lessons From the War (1900)37-112,156; Thirty-Five Years 244-5; Hamer 179-83.

15. On the 'new' Right see G.R. Searle, 'Critics of Edwardian Society: The Case of the Radical Right' in (ed) Alan O'Day, The Edwardian Age (1979)79-96; Searle, 'The 'Revolt from the Right' in Edwardian Britain' in (ed) Paul Kennedy & Anthony Nicholls, Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914 (1918) 21-39.
16. Arnold-Forster op.cit; Lord Brassey, The Naval Annual (1886)10-11; Clarke, Imperial Defence 179-81; C.W. Dilke, The British Army (1888)393,406; R. Vesey Hamilton, 'The Navy and the Empire' Quarterly R. (Jan'85)212-3; Lord Hood, 'The British Navy', ib (April'94)297-8; Maurice, Balance xxxi; National Defences 13-20,38-42; Wilkinson, Command 102-5.
17. Wilson, Ironclads II 85. Cf Fred. T. Jane, Heresies of Sea Power (1906) 175-6.
18. 'A Naval Utopia', Blackwood's (June'96) 795-808.
19. Jane 152-61; Marder, Dreadnought I 359. Cf H. Geffcken, 'The Future of Maritime Warfare', Contemp.R. (Jan'94) 44.
20. W.E. Bear, 'Our Food Supply in the Event of War', National R. (Mar'96) 133.
21. R.B. Marston, 'Corn Stores for War-time', Nineteenth C. (Feb'96); Famine and our Food Supply (1897); 'Our Urgent Need of a Reserve of Wheat', Nineteenth C. (June'98); R.A. Yerburch, 'National Granaries', Nat.R. (April'96); Clarke, Imperial Defence 57-9; Marder, Anatomy 92-3; Dreadnought I 358-67; Ranft thesis; Ranft, Technical Change; David French,

British Economic and Strategic Planning 1905-1915  
(1982)18-19,51-7.

22. Cf H.G. Wells.
23. H.W. Wilson, 'The Protection of Our Commerce in War',  
Nineteenth C. (Feb'96)225.
24. See next chapter.
25. 'Recent Naval Biography and Criticism', Blackwood's  
(March'97): attribution from Wellesley Index I,198.
26. He also considered the 'fleet in being controversy':  
cf P.H. Colomb, Essays on Naval Defence (1896)  
173-4.
27. 'The Navy Estimates', Blackwood's (April'97).
28. Steevens, The Tragedy of Dreyfus (1899)151; From  
Capetown to Ladysmith (1900) 135-143.

### 3. 'DAILY MAIL' AND 'LAND OF THE DOLLAR'

In May 1896 Alfred Harmsworth, the 'young Napoleon' of Fleet Street, launched the Daily Mail, soon an outstanding success with the largest circulation of any daily newspaper.<sup>1</sup> It circulated initially in London and the south of England then extended into the provinces, gaining readers from the largely Liberal provincial dailies and weakening the provincial press. Financed largely by lucrative advertising and using some of the American innovations introduced in the 'eighties by Stead on the Pall Mall Gazette, it deliberately retained the conservative external appearance, with the first page covered by advertisements, of the model of morning dailies, The Times. It was the first halfpenny morning paper with a news service competing with those of its higher-priced rivals, and its news was more edited into a coherent body, and more brightly and briefly displayed. It was lighter, livelier, more readable and trivial than its older rivals, with less parliamentary and political reporting, more 'Society' gossip and sales stunts. Though radicals disapproved,<sup>2</sup> contemporary journalists agreed that Harmsworth succeeded by providing what the public wanted.<sup>3</sup> A.G. Gardiner wrote that he had, "the common mind to an uncommon degree".<sup>3a</sup> Norman Angell, who despite disapproval of Harmsworth's politics worked for him, emphasised his "genius for reaching the popular mind" and claimed that more than any other of his generation he influenced the public and became "an immensely powerful force in the shaping of the mores and values of his time".<sup>4</sup> Despite Salisbury's gibe, it was a paper of the middle classes and

gained circulation largely from the Daily Telegraph.<sup>5</sup>

Though Harmsworth stated it was to be written for men with or aspiring to £1,000 a year, it was largely aimed at clerks, and expressed and exploited lower middle class attitudes and anxieties.<sup>6</sup> German clerks, in the context of German hostility and commercial rivalry with Britain, became for many a scapegoat and an obsession: the Mail emphasised the issue. Economically insecure and struggling to maintain appearance and status - Christina Steevens wrote of "the wretched struggle to look and dress on a hundred and fifty pounds a year as if they had three or four hundred"<sup>7</sup> - many in the middle class felt threatened by change. They responded variously. A few turned to socialism and Clarion cycling. Mr. Pooter painted the bath and hoped. Most remained loyal to their middle class identification, individualism, self-help and respectability. Following the bourgeoisie many left the Liberals for the Unionists. They also responded, as Price has noted, by jingoism and imperialism: hence, later, clerks' leading role in Boer War demonstrations.<sup>8</sup>

The Daily Mail was from the start imperialist, defence-minded and bellicist, devoting to imperial affairs double the space of any other London daily. In February 1896 it claimed, referring to the Sudan, that, "a little blood letting is good for a nation that tends to excess of luxury".<sup>9</sup> Harmsworth knew the popularity of description of war, reportage and fiction, and their potential for increasing newspaper sales. Before starting the Mail he had sensationally exploited future-war fiction: in 1894 in Answers with Le Queux's 'The Poisoned Bullet' later



published as The Great War in England in 1897, and in 1895 to promote his Portsmouth candidature with Clowes' 'The Siege of Portsmouth'. He combined his fiction, itself ostensibly defence propaganda, with navalist warnings of Britain's vulnerability. In its imperialism and bellicism, as in its Germanophobia, the Mail was probably responding to rather than "manipulating" its readers, and reinforced rather than initiated the widespread support for the Empire, imperial war and defence: as Sydney Dark wrote, the Mail "was certainly what the public wanted".<sup>10</sup>

Among Steeven's London acquaintance, and one of those with whom he discussed naval defence, was his wife's old friend, Dilke. In May 1896 Dilke, having just met Harmsworth, wrote to Steevens comparing Harmsworth to Bonaparte and calling him "perhaps the most remarkable man I have ever seen", and suggesting that, with the similarity of Steevens' and Harmsworth's ideas, he might work for Harmsworth.<sup>11</sup> Steevens applied and was accepted by the Mail. Unsuccessful at leading articles, in June he was sent to report Richmond Horse Show. Harmsworth later wrote, "Genius was shown in that report, and I at once saw that here was a man of extraordinary power of observation, with an entirely new way of recording what he had seen".<sup>12</sup> He was a "cameo" writer who "took immense pains over his work". Outstandingly successful in descriptive writing, he was sent on a series of assignments in the United Kingdom and overseas, and worked for the Mail for the rest of his life. As the Illustrated London News obituary stated, "his qualities as a special reporter and as a describer of current history were brought into full play, and received

their full recognition from a public that wearied of the old conventions".<sup>13</sup> His writings for the Mail made him famous.

From September to November 1896 he reported on the United States and its presidential election, then from his reports compiled The Land of the Dollar (1897), the first of his six books of overseas reportage: a mixture of travelogue, impressions and opinion.<sup>14</sup> He respected the Americans, admired some aspects of the United States and condemned others including political corruption, industrial violence and, despite his social darwinism, the trusts. He emphasised the differences from Britain and warned that McKinley's protectionism would harm Britain. Expressing imperialist populationism, he condemned American family limitation.<sup>15</sup> He condemned American negroes as inferior, lazy and like monkeys, and advocated segregation and disenfranchisement.<sup>16</sup> He noted American fascination with war: "no nation in the world is more fond of playing at soldiers"(p137). He suggested their bellicosity was partly because their last war was, "not far enough off to be inconceivable, while it is just too far for the personal recollection of its horrors"(ib). This concept of knowledge of war deterring from war he had included in his Blackwood's article on arbitration, but he later omitted it from his war correspondence, which minimised war's horrors and emphasised its positive qualities. He again condemned arbitration. He admitted, "I know nothing of military affairs"(p208). He continued his message of social darwinism, navalism and defence with warnings against United States Anglophobia,

expansionism, bellicosity and naval potential: they might gain world naval supremacy.<sup>17</sup> He wanted improved relations but disliked the price they might demand. His American reportage set the pattern of his later work: vivid, sometimes perceptive, dogmatic, impressionistic, sometimes distorted, superficial, written from relative ignorance and inadequate research. His style was original but his message largely orthodox, and acceptable to Harmsworth and Daily Mail readers. After Steevens' death contemporaries disputed his politics: writing on the United States he had criticised the rich and powerful and sympathized with the exploited.

Steevens' American reporting was successful and established his career as a Daily Mail 'star' reporter.<sup>18</sup> His book was favourably reviewed, and praised by Harmsworth.<sup>19</sup> Steevens became a friend of Harmsworth: "the schoolboy in Alfred went out to meet the schoolboy in Steevens" and, Christina Steevens wrote, Harmsworth forwarded any scheme likely to benefit Steevens' career.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. 'DAILY MAIL' & 'LAND OF THE DOLLAR'

1. On Harmsworth and the Mail largely from Pemberton; Pound & Harmsworth; Koss; E.T. Raymond, Uncensored Celebrities (1919); D. Read, The English Provinces (1964), A. Smith, The Newspaper (1979); L. Brown, Victorian News.
2. A.J. Lee, 'The Radical Press' in (ed) A.J.A. Morris, Edwardian Radicalism 1900-1914 (1974) 47-8.
3. S. Dark, The Life of Sir Arthur Pearson (1922) 86.
- 3A. Quo N. Angell, After All (1951) 126-7.
4. N. Angell, After All (1951) 110-28. 'Norman Angell' was the pen-name of Ralph Norman Angell Lane (1872-1967).
5. Koss 358.
6. On the lower middle class largely from (ed) G. Crossick, The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914 (1977)
7. Mrs. G.W. Steevens 129. Steevens attributed Germanophobia primarily to hostility to German clerks, Three Nations 276.
8. R. Price, An Imperial War and the British Working Class (1972) passim.
9. 22 Feb 1896 quo R. Price, 'Society, Status and Jingoism: The Social Roots of Lower Middle Class Patriotism' in (ed) Crossick 96.
10. Dark 86.
11. Dilke to Steevens, 8 May 1896, quo Pound & Harmsworth 208.
12. Quo Pemberton 619.
13. ILN CXV (27 Jan 1901) 113.

14. The Land of the Dollar (1897): page references to this. Steevens summarised his impressions of American politics in a signed article, 'The Presidential Election as I saw it', Blackwood's (Dec '96) 859-75, condemning the trusts and corruption. On British attitudes to U.S.A. see Charles W. Dilke, Problems of Greater Britain (1890) I 2-5; Max Beloff, Imperial Sunset I (1969) 41-6; Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (1971) 101-2; Correlli Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (1972) 254-62. Steevens wrote during relatively bad Anglo-American relations and emphasised Anglophobia rather than ties.
  
15. Dollar 25. On imperialist populationism J.L. Garvin, 'The Maintenance of Empire' in (ed) C.S. Goldman, The Empire and the Century (1905) 69-76; L.S. Amery, 'Imperial Defence and National Policy' in ib 174-84; Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', Hist. Workshop 5 (1978) 9-14.
  
16. Dollar 102. For the racial-ideological context see Louis L. Snyder, The Idea of Racism (1962); H.A.C. Cairns, Prelude to Imperialism (1965); C. Van Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (1966); V.G. Kiernan, The Lords of Human Kind (1969); Michael Howard, 'Empire, Race and War in pre-1914 Britain', Hist. Today xxxi (Dec '81) 4-11. For H.J. Field's comments on Steevens' "characteristic racial stereotyping" see Field 158-9, 192-3. Field (193) suggests Steevens suffered, "systemic overload from all those facile, mindless notions his persona had gathered"!
  
17. Dollar 42, 46, 133-43.
  
18. Blackburn 178; Abrahams 18; Hamilton Fyfe, Northcliffe: an intimate biography (1930) 89.
  
19. Quo Pemberton 68.
  
20. Fyfe 90; C. Steevens, 'Preface' to G.W. Steevens, Glimpses of Three Nations (1901).

#### 4. THE GRAECO-TURKISH WAR

Before 1897 Steevens had shown no interest in armies and land war. At school and Oxford he had been politically radical with views often associated with hostility to defence.<sup>1</sup> His school had no cadet corps and he chose not to join the University Rifle Volunteers. Though he became a war correspondent his predominant interest was elsewhere. The brief Graeco-Turkish War of 1897 aroused little concern in Britain. British opinion was largely philhellenic and Turcophobe and some young liberals including F.W. Hirst and 'Norman Angell' went, as did Italian Garibaldi, to help the Greeks. The press, knowing war increased sales, sent correspondents and artists, including Villiers.<sup>2</sup> The Liberal press, especially the Daily Chronicle, favoured the Greeks. Harmsworth sent Steevens. His friends were anxious lest his physique were too weak for the hardships of a war correspondent but he, like Kipling, was eager for manly experience and welcomed his opportunity. Unlike most western correspondents he accompanied the Turkish army, and from his experiences and reports wrote his Blackwood's article 'What happened in Thessaly' and his book With the Conquering Turk, both published in 1897.<sup>3</sup>

His reporting and his book were typical of his journalism: descriptions of his own experiences and impressions; the vivid vignettes which so impressed contemporaries; and the polemical denunciations. He was partisan: Forbes had been a more objective and better reporter. Steevens identified with the Turks, alleged the British press misrepre-

sented them, and praised their warrior qualities and good behaviour. He condemned the Greeks as arrogant liars, "a race of swaggerers and cowards" (p180), their peasant huts no more civilised than those of Ashanti: yet, "whom nothing apparently will deprive of Britain's sympathy as long as he quotes Byron and lives in the land of the Alcibiades".<sup>4</sup> He dismissed the Armenian massacres, refusing to, "discuss the wrongs of Armenian usurers and Anarchists" (p110). His partisanship was indicative of his unreliability as a reporter: such commitment tends to omission and distortion. He described and evaluated the Turkish army, more vividly but less informatively than Forbes had the Russian. He alleged that British correspondents, misled by their scruffy appearance, underestimated Turkish soldiers. They were tough, enduring, disciplined and fearless, and their organization and logistics adequate. However their commanders were ignorant, inefficient, slow, and failed to exploit the successes won by their men: most generals were, "hopeless...insubordinate, absolutely incapable of combination" (p305). He alleged, echoing Forbes on the Russians, "The Turks have the best soldiers and worst officers in the world" (p300). They won, despite their commanders, because of their soldiers' qualities.

As in the writings of other war correspondents there was much on his own experience: his problems, servants, meals, accommodation, transport, thirst, boredom and other emotions. He claimed that Levantines lied and so he determined, "to state nothing on any authority unless I had either seen it myself or had heard it from a European who

had seen it"(118). His description of the war was arguably more revealing of his attitude than of the war itself, and at the same time indicative of the attitudes of those who continued to employ, read and praise him. The wide acceptability of his attitudes was itself significant. It was, though he did not mention it, his first experience of war. He was enthusiastic for war, and continued so throughout. He described himself as "childishly happy" before battle, and he wrote of the battle of Pharsala, "there was one very fine bit of fighting which it was worth coming all the way from England to see"(228). He wrote of a period of boredom, waiting in town for further action, "But you do not realise the full value of battle until you get a spell of war without it"(214). His descriptions of battle, inferior to Forbes', were distanced: those of an observer lacking empathy with men in combat. He was vague on the sights of battle, omitting detail and horror. He once wrote that the battle he was watching, "became a bore"(140). He claimed that war was like "coming of age"<sup>5</sup> and could improve men, writing of a Turkish officer, "War had taken hold of that stupid, sponging, unmannerly cub, and made a man of him"(207). While vague on the scenes of battle, he was sometimes specific, if partially expurgating, on the scenes of its aftermath. He described Greek bodies in a blockhouse,

"heads caked in blood...flesh puffed and swollen, skin yellow like wax; flies feasting on the half-decomposed faces; hands clenched, looking curiously small and smooth, like hands at Mme Tussaud's; wounds dry, but



dirty and gaping; one man's face torn and bashed into a mass of squashy red, - that is enough, once and for all, to say of the dead"(p147).

His final chapter he entitled 'What War feels like'. It was not about what it felt like for the combatant, a question he failed even to consider, but for Steevens, the privileged, distanced and relatively safe observer. He claimed much of war was like peace, and that the horrors of war, in contrast to one's expectations, "leave you quite unmoved"(p307). He wrote, "It was interesting to see masses of men trying to kill one another, but not surprising; you knew before that was what they did in war"(p310). When seeing the dead,

"you were not even sorry...they only looked like strange shapes turned out of a mould, and you cannot weep for shapes out of a mould. When a shell had ripped all the features off a face, it was not pleasant to look at; but there was nothing left about it to stir compassion"(p308).

He stated that one's attitudes changed in war, becoming concerned with the bare essentials of food and shelter, regardless of how obtained, a "return to the naked state of nature"(p312). War was attractive and enjoyable: "the only quite complete holiday ever invented"(p313).

So in his first war correspondence Steevens showed himself biased and bellicist. He minimised matériel factors and emphasised morale, claiming the Turks won because of their superior moral qualities. Preoccupied

with his own personal response, he was insensitive and incurious as to the combatants. He presented war as exciting, adventurous and undistressing. He accepted war unquestioning and, implicitly, saw it as a test of nations that revealed and judged their true qualities.<sup>6</sup> Underlying his writing was his unspoken assumption of social darwinism. He was exceptionally intelligent and able, as his academic career proved, and he was a successful writer whose style greatly attracted his contemporaries. Yet, as comparison with Forbes indicated, he had major limitations as a war correspondent and apparently failed to recognise them, and relied too much on his ability as a writer, as a painter of vivid word pictures of what he observed. Yet, ignorant, he observed less than would a knowledgeable man. He was capable of acquiring competence in a subject, as he had in naval policy. But unlike Forbes he did not study warfare. Like his less privileged contemporary H.G. Wells, Steevens was arguably the victim of his own brilliance and an early-acquired reputation. Clever but ignorant, he too often saw only the surface. He did not question, nor usually see beyond his own immediate experience. War was for him a series of happenings, sometimes boring and sometimes exciting, that he witnessed and described. He showed little interest or awareness of the conduct of war - of materiel, tactics and strategy - and was unconcerned with the possible implications for future warfare of what he witnessed. His book was impressionistic, skimpy in data, and lacked systematic description of such relevant matter as uniforms, weapon, equipment and transport which, even if censored from his original reports, could have been

added to the book: here he differed from Forbes. Steevens' was a very limited form of war correspondence. That it was published, when it so contrasted with the earlier writings of Forbes, indicated the values and relative triviality of Harmsworth's "new journalism".

Steevens' attitude to the Turkish massacre of Armenians, which he so briefly and cavalierly dismissed, further revealed his attitudes and message as a war correspondent. It showed his rejection of his family's non-conformity, and his bias and callousness. Such callousness may or may not be necessary in a war correspondent but it affects the image he presents and excessive callousness may cause distortion by ignoring and omitting human factors basic in the experience of war. If the extent of the massacres was uncertain, their reality was not.<sup>7</sup> Salisbury, Gladstone and British public opinion were horrified. Steevens knew of the massacres, yet chose to dismiss them, contemptuously challenging British humanitarian opinion by his book's subtitle Confessions of a Bashi-Bazouk. Forbes was from the age of Dickens; Steevens, so proud of his modernity, from that of Nietzsche. Forbes, extensively experienced in war, was sometimes, apparently, callous and brutal in writing on war, especially in his late articles on the future of war. Yet he saw the human cost of war, the tragedies behind the casualty statistics. His reporting of the wounded and his sad and sentimental tales of girls whose sweethearts died in battle, indicated a different attitude from the callous detachment - possibly a deliberate defensive insensitivity - of Steevens, to whom

the dead were as waxworks and who, apparently, ignored the bereaved. The contrast may in part have resulted from individual character and experience. In 1897 Steevens, unlike Forbes, had not known the death in battle of his friends. It may in part have resulted from different perceptions of Britain's world power position. Both were patriots and imperialists. However, while Forbes' formative years were the zenith of British power, Steevens' were when it was declining and threatened. The motive of his tough-mindedness - which possibly may have been a deliberate pose, as may have been Forbes' sentimentality - he later stated in two articles crucial for understanding his attitudes and message: 'The New Humanitarianism' in 1898 and 'From the New Gibbon' in 1899. Yet despite its faults and inferiority to Forbes' work Steevens' work was valued by many of his contemporaries. Harmsworth was sufficiently pleased to again employ him as a war correspondent. Reviewers praised his book: the St. James's Gazette for example called it, "remarkably bright and vivid". Later in his Morning Post obituary tribute Spenser Wilkinson praised Steevens' Thessaly war correspondence as, "a series of descriptions of battles which have, perhaps, never been surpassed for the truth and force of the impression they conveyed of what a battle looks like".<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. THE GRAECO-TURKISH WAR: NOTES

1. Political radicals concerned with defence included Chamberlain, Dilke and, as a young man, Wilkinson.
2. Villiers, Pictures 73-82; Villiers II 173-83.
3. G.W. Steevens, 'What happened in Thessaly', Blackwood's (July '97) reprinted in Things Seen (1900) 37-68; With the Conquering Turk: Confessions of a Bashibazouk (1897). Page references to the latter.
4. Things Seen 68.
5. Conquering Turk 310. Cf Holmes, Firing Line 396.
6. Possibly his response was conditioned by the public school ethos (arguably strongest in new middle-class schools like C.L.S., Dulwich or Clifton): loyalty to one's side, toughness and no blubbing over suffering. See also Geoffrey Best, 'Militarism and the Victorian Public School' in (ed) Brian Simon & Ian Bradley, The Victorian Public School (1975) 130-46.
7. An. Register 1895 I 160-3, 284-94, II 53-66; 1896 I 183-7, II 2, 49-55; W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism (1956) 321-6; Shannon 36; Leo Kupner, Genocide (1981) 106; Norman Ravitch, 'The Armenian Massacre', Encounter (Dec. 1981). As with the Bulgarian massacres there was much British press coverage and a national campaign against the Armenian massacres. Steevens was exceptionally Turcophil, possibly because of his lack of religion? He had condemned British policy as irrationally pro-Armenian and condoned the massacres in 'The Apotheosis of Russia', Blackwood's CLX (July '96) 141.
8. Morning Post (22 Jan 1900) quo Field 145. Wilkinson himself had never seen a battle.

## 5. GERMANY AND FRANCE

In 1896 the Kruger telegram aroused British fury, and Steevens' response was typical of this.<sup>1</sup> His short signed article 'The Indiscretions of the Kaiser' in Henley's New Review denounced it as an insult by an enemy.<sup>2</sup> He stated themes which he repeated through his later writing: the assertion of British interests and the necessity of defending them, and German enmity and threat. His proposal of the diplomatic isolation of Germany by winning over Italy and so ending the Triple Alliance was an ill-considered response he did not repeat. Thenceforth he warned against the German threat.

The launching of the Daily Mail coincided with popular Germanophobia following the telegram and the 'Made in Germany' economic anxiety. Harmsworth shared and, believing readers "liked a good hate", exploited this, and the Mail warned against German militarism and aggression.<sup>3</sup> In 1897 it sent Steevens as a special correspondent 'Eye-Witness' to Germany. He wrote sixteen articles, the first headed 'Under the Iron Heel', emphasising the differences between Britain and Germany, warning against the German threat and again expressing his social darwinist view of international relations.<sup>4</sup> He emphasised the domination of Germany by the army, and warned of German economic competition, Anglophobia and world-power ambition, and of the possibility of Germany dominating the Netherlands and China and of a German-led continental alliance against Britain.<sup>5</sup> He warned of the German army's power and its

ability, if landed, to conquer Britain: the British Volunteers were inadequate.<sup>6</sup> War was not inevitable but the British should beware. He praised the benefits of German conscription - improving peasants mentally and townsmen physically - but, unlike Spenser Wilkinson, did not draw specific lessons for Britain.<sup>7</sup> Characteristically his reporting was vivid samplings, sketches and generalizations, sometimes perceptive but largely superficial and lacking in data. In 1898 he published in Blackwood's 'German Country Life' regretting the replacement of paternalist agrarian society by inferior urban and industrial society.<sup>8</sup> He claimed the Franco-Prussian War was an enriching experience for the German combatants, that battle, "hardened them from boys to made men", another expression of his bellicism.<sup>9</sup> Like Harmsworth, Garvin, Amery and other imperialists, he combined respect for German qualities with concern at the German threat.<sup>10</sup>

In the autumn of 1898 he briefly and contemptuously reported aspects of French life for the Mail. He criticised the French as immoral, grasping and provincial, divided and demoralised by the Dreyfus affair, and no danger to Britain.<sup>11</sup> Contrasting with his view of German conscription, he noted without comment French allegations of the harmful effects of conscription: disease, physical ruin and anti-patriotism.<sup>12</sup> Despite his philosophic training he was not always a consistent thinker but rather responded to specific situations and prejudices.

The Dreyfus affair, "the biggest newspaper story since the crucifixion",<sup>13</sup> combined moral issues, militarism and anti-semitism, with the bizarre implausibility of a Le Queux melodrama. British responses combined moral concern, titillation and schadenfreude. In the summer of 1899 Steevens reported for the Mail the retrial of Dreyfus, then compiled his longest book, The Tragedy of Dreyfus.<sup>14</sup> Like most British he believed Dreyfus not guilty, and he criticised the conduct of the trial. He emphasised the differences between France and England, and claimed the affair showed the rottenness of the French government and generals and - repeating his theme of the city weakening the nation - of Paris though not of the provinces, but that with declining population the provinces could not indefinitely save France: Paris would suck them dry. The affair weakened France, destroying trust in its institutions. Implicit was his theme of the indivisibility of national life and the importance of morale and of apparently non-military factors in a nation's military capability, its strength for the international struggle. He noted the different responses to conscription: a minority, "still smarting from the petty brutalities of sergeants who delight to bully boys of a better class"(296) hated the army, but the majority adored it and allowed the generals excessive power. He stated that if in England treachery were discovered in the navy and the admirals took one side and the "little Englanders" the other, he would trust the admirals.<sup>15</sup> His Dreyfus reporting had his usual qualities and flaws: "good copy" but dogmatic, superficial and insufficiently researched: the Spectator rightly criticised his book as "largely impressionistic".<sup>16</sup>



## 5. GERMANY & FRANCE: NOTES

1. ILN CVIII (Jan'96); An. Register 1896; (ed) L.S. Amery, The Times History of the War in South Africa I (1900) 171-2; Langer 240-50; Kennedy 219-21; A.J.A. Morris, The Scaremongers (1984)17-23.
2. 'The Indiscretion of the Kaiser', New R. (Feb'96)176-84.
3. Kennedy 362, Pound & Harmsworth 232.
4. Reprinted in (ed) V. Blackburn, G.W. Steevens, Glimpses of Three Nations (1901): page-references to this. Steevens read German and was possibly influenced, if indirectly, by Nietzsche. He had the Victorian and journalistic habit of inadequate citation of sources.
5. Ib 295. That the possibility of a continental alliance was more than British paranoia was shown by the continental powers' activities, since revealed, Langer 446-8,652-3,664-72; Kennedy 245.
6. Ib 289.
7. Glimpses 284-5.
8. 'German Country Life', Blackwood's (March'98)368-77; signed article.
9. Ib 373.
10. Kennedy 394.
11. Reprinted in Glimpses.
12. Ib 142.
13. Angell, After all 96. See also articles by F.C. Conybeare, Sir Godfrey Lushington and L.J. Maxse in the National Review 1897-1900; Ralph Lane, Patriotism Under Three Flags (1909)3,178-92; Geoffrey Best, Honour among men and nations (1982)39-42,

14. The Tragedy of Dreyfus (1899); page-references to this.  
He also wrote articles: 'The Dreyfus Case'.  
M'Clure's Mag.: 'The Effect on France', Harper's Mag.  
(both Oct '99) rp Things Seen 147-84. See also  
Spectator (23 June 1900) 877.
15. Ib 151.
16. Spectator 88 (23 June 1900) 877.

6. EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1898

In the winter of 1897 to '98 Steevens reported on Egypt, then compiled Egypt in 1898.<sup>1</sup> He praised the British working there: "Our record is one which any other nation would be proud of, which no other nation could achieve" (195). However he criticised British businessmen's failure to compete effectively for the Egyptian market, and functionless rentier tourists.<sup>2</sup> He despised the Egyptians as morally inferior, idle and cowardly: "backsheesh, backsheesh - the national anthem of Egypt" (217). Many disliked the British, whose presence was based on force and, "Britain will never quit Egypt" (188). Since Gordon's mission the British press and books had denounced the Mahdist regime and justified war against it.<sup>3</sup> Steevens likewise denounced it for slavery, atrocities and genocide, and claimed this justified the reconquest, though Britain would not significantly gain economically.<sup>4</sup> His book was favourably reviewed. It was vivid, impressionistic, superficial, largely unoriginal journalism, imperialist apologia and cliché. His non-military writings formed the context of his military writings, and it complemented his next book, With Kitchener to Khartum. Unlike Chamberlain he lacked the imaginative vision to see future potential.<sup>5</sup> Like Dilke with Uganda, he failed to see the Sudan's potential.<sup>6</sup> Though he lacked Kipling's genius, much of his message and tone were similar to Kipling's: the denigration of some natives, the assertion of British qualities and the beneficence of British rule, the white man's burden. That such writing was so popular and so praised indicated current attitudes and anxieties: the perception of Britain and the Empire endangered.

With strong popular imperialism the 1898 Sudan campaign was extensively reported. The Mail sent Steevens, well supplied with drink and Fortnum and Mason provisions. It boosted the reports from "our brilliant correspondent" and they increased its circulation, allegedly gaining more readers among the richer middle class: in October it printed an analysis of its circulation from March to September in relation to its war news.<sup>7</sup> From his reports Steevens compiled With Kitchener to Khartum (1898), an influential best-seller and his most popular work.<sup>8</sup> It was description, largely first-person narrative, of his experiences and of the campaign, concentrating on the latter stages and especially the battle of Omdurman, and repeating themes from his Egypt in 1898 including praise of the British, condemnation of the Mahdists and justification of the reconquest, despite the Sudan's economic unprofitability. He condemned the Mahdist regime as anachronistic, cruel, destructive tyranny which ruined the Sudan, oppressed its conquered peoples and perpetrated slave-raiding and slavery: "the fourteen years of dervish devilry"(p77). He emphasised Mahdist massacres and depopulation.<sup>9</sup> He condemned the city of Omdurman: "planless confusion, shiftless stupidity, contented filth and beastliness"(p300). He emphasised Mahdist lust and filth, disgusting to his respectable readers: "the whole city was a huge harem...a monstrosity of African lust...And foul. They dropped their dung where they listed...The stench of the place was in your nostrils...the accursed place was left to fester and fry in its own filth and lust and blood"(p301,309). The nature of the regime justified British reconquest: "its abominations steamed up

to heaven to justify us of our vengeance"(309). The British saved Egypt and the Sudan from Mahdism: "The Sudan's gain is immunity from rape and torture and every extreme of misery" (324). Victorian heroes had fought the slave trade, and the British were proud of its suppression: in Britain anti-slavery was still emotive and influential.<sup>10</sup> Steevens condemned the Mahdist state as a slave-raiding, slave-exploiting regime, where men were kidnapped, "sold in the slave-market, shipped up the Nile to die of Fashoda fever, cut to pieces, crucified, impaled"(320).

Victorians were moralistic and perceptions of causation and justice - whether a particular war was morally justified - were crucial in Victorian attitudes to war. In Britain, while retention of the existing empire was generally accepted, any imperial expansion - and especially any war of imperial expansion - was controversial. Critics of imperial expansion alleged economic greed.<sup>11</sup> Steevens did not name such critics and their allegations yet his book in part implicitly answered them. It was more than campaign reportage. He argued the imperialist case for the reconquest - that it was a just war - from the nature of the Mahdist regime and the benefits of its destruction to Egypt and the Sudan. The Sudan would benefit from peace and civilised government. Egypt would benefit from lower defence costs and so more economic development. Britain would gain, though not to any significant extent economically. It would have been economically advantageous to Britain to abandon the Sudan, but British motives there were not economic. Britain sacrificed lives and money, and fought for national honour and self-respect: "The vindication of our self-respect was

the great treasure we won at Khartum, and it was worth the price we paid for it"(318). The war was "the tardy vengeance for a great humiliation"(217). Like Wolseley and Dilke earlier, he believed the Sudan economically profitless. Even under British rule its trade would be insignificant to the British economy: the Sudan "was always a poor country, and it always must be...a God-accursed wilderness"(325). Imperialists seldom isolated imperial policy, but saw specific imperial problems in the wider context of British interests. Steevens perceived the Sudan war partly in the context of late 19th century British anxieties and foreign threats. In Egypt in 1898 he had seen the Sudan as a source of military manpower for Egypt, but in his Sudan book he claimed that, though the reconquest was not undertaken for this, the Sudan could provide military manpower to strengthen Britain and the Empire,

"The occupation...would open up some of the finest raw fighting material in the world... the rawest savagery you can imagine...To put the matter brutally, having this field for recruiting, we have too many enemies in the world to afford to lose it...we should now make...an African second to our Indian army, and use it, when the time comes, to repay the debt to ourselves".<sup>12</sup>

Steevens was a leading journalist and a skilled persuader, appealing to the beliefs - including their established image of Africa - and the fears of his largely middle-class readers, to justify an imperial war. His work was significant largely for what it showed of dominant British attitudes,

for the justification of a war as well as the image presented of the campaign itself.

As in Egypt in 1898 he repeatedly criticised non-Europeans, especially Egyptians, and asserted their inferiority to the British. He wrote of Egyptian officers, "it is the exception to find a man both capable and incorruptible"(321). Egyptians were unfit to rule the Sudan, which would have to be ruled by Britons: "To put Egyptians, corrupt, lazy, timid, often rank cowards, to rule the Sudan, would be to invite another Mahdi"(ib). He praised the British officers of the Egyptian army who achieved so much with "inferior material"(20). The negroes were brave but savage: "The black is a perennial schoolboy, without the schooling"(29). In the Sudan, "Its people are naked and dirty, ignorant and besotted. It is a quarter of a continent of sheer squalor"(325). As in Egypt in 1898 Steevens eulogised his compatriots. He especially praised Kitchener, despite what he saw of his less attractive traits and his treatment of correspondents. Kitchener was arrogant, ambitious and tactless. He believed he could achieve his ambition through contacts with leading Unionist politicians, and he despised public opinion and the journalist who influenced and expressed it. Unlike Wolseley or Roberts, he did not attempt to conciliate and use correspondents but, apparently deliberately, antagonised them. In January 1898 he confined them to base areas and lines of communications but after John Walter, proprietor of The Times, appealed to Salisbury, he had to cancel his order.<sup>13</sup> The twenty-six correspondents were refused official transport, limited in

telegraphic facilities and given no briefings or help.<sup>14</sup>

They were ordered not to go on reconnaissances or near the Sirdar.<sup>15</sup> Terse and irritable in part from overwork

because he refused to delegate, Kitchener insulted correspondents: "Get out of my way, you drunken swabs".<sup>16</sup> After

the battle of Omdurman he sent them back to Egypt. Villiers, one of them, wrote that Kitchener regarded them as a great nuisance and seldom disguised his aversion, but was treated loyally and leniently by them.<sup>17</sup> However, he was more

favourable to two usefully-connected correspondents of Conservative papers, the Hon. Hubert Howard, son of the Earl of Carlisle, the Times correspondent, and Steevens. In his reports and his book Steevens, as did most of the press, eulogised Kitchener and presented him as hard, efficient, almost superhuman in his ability. He contrasted the failure of Wolseley's "Empire-ballet business" with Kitchener's success: "the extempore, amateur scrambles of Wolseley's campaign and the machine-like precision of Kitchener's...

It is exactly the difference between the amateur and the professional"(196). He wrote of Kitchener, "the brain and

the will are the essence and the whole of the man...he is more like a machine than a man...the Sudan Machine".<sup>18</sup> He

was a master of management who would be "a splendid manager of the War Officer"(146). He initiated and made the rail-

way. Steevens praised Kitchener's initiative, his defiance of accepted opinion to achieve what had been believed

impossible: for example, his use of river gunboats. He was ambitious: "the man of destiny - the man who has been preparing himself sixteen years for one great purpose"(51).

He was ruthless with his officers, refusing to allow married



officers, or officers to go to Cairo in the season. Yet he was not unpopular, for he defeated the enemy: "Other generals have been better loved: none was ever better trusted"(ib). Steevens did not mention that Kitchener never spoke to private soldiers; but then neither did Steevens. Kitchener was a man of decisive action: "all patience for a month, all swiftness when the day comes"(p160). He omitted Kitchener's indecision in April before Mahmoud's Atbara position; after the Atbara he wrote of "the perfection of the Sirdar's strategy"(p160). His success resulted from having "never given battle without making certain of an annihilating victory"(p111). Steevens claimed that, "the Sirdar is the only English general who has known how to campaign in this country"(p111). Perhaps from ignorance, Steeven did not mention what so alarmed Baring, the possibility, in the period between the occupation of Abu Hamed and the final advance on Omdurman, of enemy attack cutting the line of communication: "the somewhat perilous position in which Sir Herbert Kitchener's army was unquestionably placed".<sup>19</sup> He did not criticise Kitchener, nor his treatment of correspondents. He stated that his refusal of transport to correspondents was "most natural and proper" and that he helped him and gave him information, "grave as always, gracious and courteous, volunteering facilities"(p214). Tactful, Steevens did not give the impression he was specially favoured by Kitchener. After Steevens' death Kitchener praised him: "He was with me in the Sudan, and, of course, I saw a great deal of him...He did his work as correspondent so brilliantly, and he never gave the slightest trouble - I wish all correspondents were like him".<sup>20</sup> Kitchener later admitted

privately that he had plagiarised Steevens' reports for his own dispatches. He told Riddell, "That G.W. Steevens who died was a genius. I often made use of his stuff. He had real insight into military affairs".<sup>21</sup> Though there was much in the book on Steevens' own experiences and hardships as a correspondent - his problems with animals, natives, heat, dust and thirst, often jocularly told and, unlike Prior or Villiers, modestly not presenting himself as heroic or in great danger - the dominating hero of the book was not Steevens but, as its Hentyesque title suggested, Kitchener. Most famous Victorian commanders established their public reputation by a single campaign: Gordon in China, Wolseley in Ashanti, Roberts in Afghanistan, and Kitchener in the Sudan. Reporting in the press and in books, was crucial to this. Steevens' account, so laudatory of Kitchener, far outsold Churchill's with its criticisms, and contributed much to establishing Kitchener's reputation, especially for efficiency.<sup>22</sup>

He also praised senior British officers: for example, he praised General Hunter as a fighter, courageous in battle, "the true knight-errant - a paladin drifted into his wrong century...When there was fighting he always led the way to it with his blacks, whom he loves like children, and who love him like a father"(p55). He praised the British officers and N.C.O.s of the Egyptian army and claimed Sudanese negro units should be British-officered: "There is no better regimental officer than the Englishman; there is no better natural fighter than the Sudanese"(ib). They respected the British because they believed them contemptuous

of death: "They have seen many Englishmen die, they have never seen an Englishman show fear"(¶91). He praised the British engine-drivers with their hot unpleasant life: "but they stick to it like Britons...They, too, are not the meanest of the conquerors of the Sudan"(¶29). He praised the British army and naval contingents, especially the young naval officers: "Impudently daring in attack...they were just the cutting-out heroes of one's youth come to life. They might have walked straight out of the 'Boy's Own Paper'"(¶183). He praised the military qualities of the British including their endurance, marching across the desert. Throughout his reporting, like that of Russell and Forbes before him, he named and described as individuals only officers. Other ranks, praised en masse and occasionally briefly quoted for Kiplingesque colour, remained anonymous tommies. He called their march to Berber "one of the great forced-marches of history"(¶66). He emphasised the heat and dust. He noted the hardship and strain of campaigning in the Sudan and its physical effects on the British: skin scaled off, hair bleached, eyes bloodshot. He emphasised "the white man's burden". British self-sacrifice for Egypt and the Sudan. He listened to British N.C.O.s and railwayman: "Their talk is half of the chances of action, and the other half of their friends that have died"(¶10). He noted the cemetery at Halfa: "see merely how full it is. Each white cross is an Englishman devoured by the Sudan"(¶169). He claimed, "The Sudan is a man-eater - red-gorged, but still insatiable...and we have watered it with more of our blood than it will ever yield to pay for"(¶169,10).

Though without military training, Steevens recognised the obvious important factors in war. He saw that logistics, and especially the Sudan Military Railway, were crucial to the campaign and praised Kitchener's recognition of this: "It is the great discovery of the Sirdar...that in the Sudan the communications are the essence and heart of the whole problem"(p169). Steevens saw the significance of terrain and distance, and claimed the real enemy was the Sudan itself. He praised Girouard's achievement, called the railway, "the deadliest weapon that Britain has ever used against Mahdism"(p22).

Steevens continued his themes of eulogy and condemnation through his book's climaxes, the descriptions of battle. He described two major battles, the Atbara in April and Omdurman in September. He praised Kitchener's decision to attack Mahmud's zariba at the Atbara, claiming that, "with a savage enemy, I suppose the rule holds that it is better and cheaper in the end to attack, and attack, and attack again"(p130). He described the bombardment, then the infantry assault with Union Jack flying, pipes, and bugles playing, volley-firing into the enemy - "volleying off the blacks as your beard comes off under a keen razor" - then charging with bayonets: "Bullet and bayonet and butt, the whirlwind of Highlanders swept over"(p148). Excitedly he described the British enthusiasm and triumph, quoting a British officer, "now I call that a very good fight"(p149). He shared their emotion, ending his description, "Once more, hurrah, hurrah!"(p151). He presented battle as enjoyable enobling experience; after it the soldiers were "drunk with

joy and triumph...Two hours had sobered them from boys to men in that Godlike moment"(p152). He had again given a vivid, mainly visual impression, showing the movement, noise and pattern of the battle. But he omitted much: the British losses - mentioned, but wounds and suffering not described - the soldiers' experiences, the fear before, the emotions during combat. He concentrated on the losses inflicted on the enemy,

"And unless you are congenitally amorous of horrors, don't look too much about you... heads without faces, and faces without anything below, cobwebbed arms and legs, and black skins grilled to crackling on smouldering palm-leaf, - don't look at it"(p151).

He did not criticise Kitchener's tactic of infantry assault on an entrenched position. After the battle he noted the British losses: typically he named and described only officers. Briefly he described the wounded - omitting agony, or hideous wounds - most "might have been lying down for a siesta"(p164). Identification with his compatriots and the exultation of victory, apparently nullified his critical sense. His was the verbal equivalent of the images created visually by his contemporaries, the Victorian battle-painters.

He described the force - strength, composition and weapons - that advanced on Omdurman, again praising the British troops, and noting the poor condition and high proportion of sick, of the unacclimatised Guards and Rifles. He showed his admiring pleasure at the army: "There are not many more pleasing sights in the world than the young British

subaltern marching alongside his company...confident in the traditions of his service and his race"(210). He began his account of the battle of Omdurman by describing the terrain and the position of the British and Egyptian units, then described the Mahdist attack. The British, "poured out death as fast as they could load and press trigger", and the Mahdists died: "It was the last day of Mahdism, and the greatest...It was not a battle, but an execution"(266). He noted the British losses, relatively few, from the fire of the advancing enemy, blaming them largely on the British use of the zariba instead of trenches, but he blamed no commander. He noted the killing of the Mahdist wounded and claimed it was necessary because they continued to fight. Again, he had presented a vivid but distanced, external and selective account of the battle, omitting its horror, the nature of the wounds and suffering again, the written equivalent of the Victorian battle paintings. He admired Mahdist courage. At the battle of Omdurman, he wrote, "No white troops would have faced that torrent of death for five minutes, but the Baggara and the blacks came on"(264). He despised their military incompetence. He described Mahmud's fortified camp at Metemmeh as "merely childish - as planless as his zariba on the Atbara"(229). He attributed the relative ease of the British victory at Omdurman largely to the Mahdists' faults. The Khalifa's generalship was "a masterpiece of imbecility" for not attacking at night or fighting in the town: "instead, he chose the one form of fight which gave him no possibility of even a partial success"(289).

Like his other books of reportage, With Kitchener to Khartum was largely Steevens' impressions and opinions, sometimes in the vivid word-pictures for which he was renowned, for example his description of Kitchener's force at the Atbara,

"All England and all Egypt, and the flowers of the black lands beyond, Birmingham and the West Highlands, the half-regenerated children of the earth's earliest civilisation, and grinning savages from the uttermost swamps of Equatoria, muscle and machinery, lord and larrikin, Balliol and Board School, the Sirdar's brain and the camel's back - all welded into one, the awful war machine went forward into action"(142).

In war battle is relatively seldom and, like his fellow correspondents, Steevens had to largely fill his reports with other information and opinion, on the terrain, climate, natives, camps and marches. He described his experiences as a war correspondent, emphasising the heat, dust and thirst, with contemptuous, humorously - intended interludes on native servants. He had written similarly on servants in the Graeco-Turkish War, as had Russell and Forbes earlier: Joseph Mathews later noted, "the servant's vital role as chief comedian in the war correspondent's drama".<sup>23</sup> He presented himself as enduring hardship but - unlike Forbes' or Villiers' self-presentation - not as heroic. Though he did not state this in print, privately he was contemptuous of the old type of war correspondent and his "mutual admiration society".<sup>24</sup> He accepted the limitations on war correspondents, implicitly

contrasting them with Forbes' era: "Why did you not make a dash for the front? the guileless editor will ask. But the modern war correspondent is not allowed to make unauthorised dashes"(212). Though modest on his own role, he praised Hubert Howard of The Times who was killed at Omdurman, while not stating that the "chance shot" which killed him was British and naval. He praised him as brave and adventurous: "He was foredoomed from the cradle to die in his boots, and asked no better...Ten minutes before he was killed he said, 'This is the happiest day of my life'"(288). He also praised Cross of the Manchester Guardian who died of enteric, another Oxford man and, "the type of an English gentleman"(289).

Again Steevens showed himself biased and bellicist, and again he showed his qualities and his limitations as a war correspondent. His account of the war was competent, vivid and superior to that of the Graeco-Turkish War. His analysis and criticism were perceptive, though seldom profound. An imperialist enthusiast for the war, he was not a debunker and did not write to attack the British authorities. His reporting was not intended as hostile exposés, and was largely eulogistic of his compatriots. Nevertheless he criticised them - though in a tone different from his strident denunciations of native failings - where he believed necessary. His criticism was not of morality or ideology, but of method and matériel: he condemned as scandalous the inadequacy of army boots despite over fourteen years' campaigning experience in the Sudan, and blamed contractors and War Office officials: "the history of the army is a string of such disgraces". He showed Anglo-



Egyptian losses at the battle of Omdurman were largely the fault of British commanders: the use of the relatively slow and vulnerable Camel Corps with the Egyptian Cavalry, Gatacre's placing his troops behind a zariba "as easy to shoot through as a sheet of paper" (p394), and Colonel Martin's blunder in ordering the charge of the 21st Lancers.<sup>25</sup> His tone was of regretful explanation, not denunciation. Moreover he did not criticise Kitchener, though his was the ultimate responsibility. He defended Kitchener's Berber triumph with Mahmud in chains - which radicals criticised - as convincing the natives of Mahmud's defeat: "You may call the show barbaric if you like, it was meant for barbarians" (p167). He supported Kitchener on what became, partly because of Churchill's criticisms, the most controversial aspects of the battle of Omdurman: the killing of the Mahdist wounded and the disposal of the Mahdi's remains. He claimed that in self-defence the soldiers had to kill the Mahdist wounded because they continued to fight. Though the Spectator review claimed, "he tells the story, omitting nothing and slurring nothing",<sup>26</sup> Steevens did omit. He did not mention the Mahdi's remains. Also he omitted some criticism which he made privately, notably the inadequacy of the medical services, which he raised with Harmsworth and with the authorities in England. Most of the correspondents expressed dissatisfaction, alleging favouritism, criticising the censor and claiming they were given too little information or freedom to obtain it. Controversy on the justification of specific imperial wars was not usually expressed by war correspondents though they sometimes criticised the conduct of a war. However in 1898

Newnes' Liberal Westminster Gazette sent a 'Little Englander' opponent of the Sudan war, E.N. Bennett, to criticise it. He criticised the British forces, the treatment of Egyptian officers as inferior to British, and portrayed the war not as romantic adventure but as sordid destruction. Veteran war correspondents such as Burleigh of the Telegraph condemned him.<sup>27</sup> Steevens did not mention him but his entire reporting of the war formed an implicit rebuttal and reached many more readers.

The Sudan campaign was the first British war that Steevens reported. It was fought at a time of foreign threat and British anxiety, of the emotions of Anglo-French antagonism and possible war which culminated in the Fashoda crisis. The campaign thrilled and reassured many British, and Steevens expressed this. Enthusiastic, he expressed patriotic pride and an aggressive and emotional bellicism. He described an ethnocentric masculine society and asserted, unquestioned, its military values. In his Graeco-Turkish reporting he had largely identified with the Turks; in the Sudan he totally, unquestioningly identified with his compatriots. His paeans of imperial praise - possibly the type of boasting against which Kipling had recently warned in 'Recessional' - were probably to counter his own and national doubts and anxieties. His references to British military qualities and future war were similar to Kipling's message in Stalky & Co.; "India's full of Stalkies - Cheltenham and Haileybury and Marlborough chaps - that we don't know anything about, and surprises will begin when there is really a big row on".<sup>28</sup> The Boer War was to

shatter, for many, such hopes. Steevens' account was, within limitations, competent. But the Sudan war was relatively easy to describe competently, because of its essential simplicity. Issues, strategy and tactics were all relatively simple. The relative complexity of the Boer War was to be a harder test of war correspondents. Despite its pace and vividness, the book showed again Steevens' limitations and his inferiority to Forbes. Too ignorant of war, he failed to question and to interpret the Sudan war in the context of wars. He drew no lessons on weapons or tactics - for example on machine guns or cavalry - and made no suggestions on the war of the future. His reporting had a specificity and immediacy that was also a myopia.

Contemporaries nevertheless admired it. His earlier works had been favourably reviewed, and With Kitchener to Khartum, probably his best book and expressing the popular view of a popular subject, was eulogised. The Spectator called it, "a masterpiece, and of a new kind", and claimed his description of the battle of Omdurman attained "the high-water mark of literature" and that he had, "pierced the intricacies of military tactics, and even soldiers who were present admit the perfect justice of his description...

this spirited and well-written book...should fill the most slothful Englishman with pride".<sup>29</sup>

The British Weekly claimed it was, "a book to buy and keep and to turn to if ever the flame of patriotism burns low". The Scotsman claimed it showed Steevens was "among the foremost of his brethren of the press as a painter of battle-pieces".

Henley later called it "a classic unsurpassed" and it was

used and quoted by historians.<sup>30</sup> Steevens' Sudan reporting was influential. His criticism of army boots led to questions in the Commons and to Lansdowne's announcement in May 1898 that an improved type would be introduced.<sup>31</sup> His criticism to Harmsworth of the medical service led Harmsworth to offer, "regardless of expenses, an ambulance to the Soudan...which would secure, for our sick and wounded, skilled nursing on modern lines, such nursing as the system in vogue at the War Office denies to them".<sup>32</sup> The War Office rejected the offer. Moreover Harmsworth continued impressed with Steevens and sent him on further overseas assignments, including as a war correspondent to South Africa.

In 1898 Steevens, though he had not attained the reputation of Forbes at his zenith, was a celebrated correspondent. Forbes had lectured to officers, and Steevens' status was indicated by his being invited to lecture, in November, the army officers of the Aldershot Military Society on "The Downfall of Mahdism".<sup>33</sup> The chairman, Major-General Barnard, introduced him as a brilliant correspondent: "most of us are familiar with his vivid and life-like descriptions"(1). His lecture was a succinct account without the colourful vignettes of his reporting, its message largely that of his reports and book. He again praised Kitchener, the British troops and the railway. Having stated, "It is not the part of a civilian observer to offer criticisms of military operations before a professional audience", he tactfully criticised British faults. He noted, a continuing grievance within the infantry, that

the English county regiments, regardless of military achievement, were less favoured by the authorities and press than more fashionable units. He criticised the Lancers' charge but suggested that, "such heroic actions often do more for the moral of an army than less brilliant operations more correctly conducted"(22). He proposed that the British should maintain an Egyptian army sufficiently strong to defend against Abyssinia, France and other European powers. He emphasised British sacrifice to gain the Sudan, and asserted that in future Britain should, "reap a harvest from the sacrifice of our many good men who have given their blood to the thirsty sands of the Sudan"(23). Following the lecture General Barnard praised Steevens' "admirable, interesting and valuable lecture"(26). The invitation to lecture and the response to his lecture indicated, as had Kitchener's treatment of him, Steevens' acceptability to the military: probably especially because he expressed their imperialist and martial values.

## 6. EGYPT & THE SUDAN, 1898: NOTES

1. G.W. Steevens, Egypt in 1898 (1898); page references to this.
2. Ib 49,91-2. Cf Strachey, Adventure 324.
3. e.g. Gordon biographies; F.R. Wingate, Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan (1891); Alfred Milner, England in Egypt (1892); Rudolf C. Slatin, Fire and Sword in the Sudan (1896); John Geddie, 'The Soudan', Chambers's J. XIII (Sept '96) 614-8. Post-colonial Sudanese and other 'African-centred' (in fact largely northern-Sudanese centred) historians have alleged such works were distorted propaganda and have attempted, arguably unconvincingly, to vindicate the Mahdist régime.
4. Steevens, Egypt 165-6, 279.
5. Strachey 336.
6. C.W. Dilke, 'The Uganda Problem', Fortnightly R. (Feb '93) 145-61.
7. D. Mail (1 Oct '98), Mathews 295.
8. G.W. Steevens, With Kitchener to Khartum (1898); page-references to this. It was one of several journalistic accounts of the campaign.
9. e.g. 87,107,225,230-2.
10. James Duffy, Portugal in Africa (1962) 134-6; A Question of Slavery (1967) 102-229, *passim*. On the use of anti-slavery to justify colonial expansion see D.A. Low, 'British Public Opinion and 'The Uganda Question', October-December 1892', Uganda J. (Sept. 1954); Margery Perham, Lugard; The Years of Adventure 1858-1898 (1956) 413-27; A.P. Thornton, Doctrines of Imperialism (1965) 65; R. Robinson & J. Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians (1967) 308; G.N. Uzoigwe, 'The Mombase-Victoria Railway, 1890-1902' Kenya H.R. IV (1971) 19,26.
11. e.g. R. Churchill, W.S. Blunt on Egypt 1882; Labouchere on the Matabele War and Jameson Raid. See Bernard

Porter, Critics of Empire (1968). Dilke and other radicals condemned the reconquest. Dilke, Memoirs, Ad Ms 43,941 p302, Dilke Papers, BL.

12. Steevens, Kitchener 322-3. Baring also praised the fighting qualities of Sudanese negroes, Cromer 477. Intermittent proposals were made until the 1950s that the British should utilise African military manpower on a large scale but this was not done except in the world wars.
13. Philip Magnus, Kitchener (1958, '61)122. Steevens had criticised the exclusion of correspondents, Egypt 199.
14. Steevens, Kitchener 112; Philip Knightley The First Casualty (1975) 54.
15. Steevens, Kitchener 92, 132.
16. Magnus 136.
17. Villiers, Personalities 195-6; Villiers II 268.
18. Steevens, Kitchener 46. The Spectator review, largely favourable, criticised his portrayal of Kitchener as "a point of view, not a portrait", Spectator (15 Oct '98) 526.
19. Cromer II 94-5.
20. Blackburn 178.
21. G.W. Riddell, Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914-1918 (1933) 76 quo Mathews 224.
22. Pound & Harmsworth 253. Cf ILN CXV (23 Dec '99)901. Kitchener was commemorated in Staffordshire pottery. Cf Opie 7.
23. Mathews 253.
24. Lionel James, High Pressure (1929)88, Field 173.

25. Steevens, Kitchener 273,287,292-3. On the charge and responses to it v also this thesis p119-22. Pace Field 173 it was not "the last ever by British soldiers".
26. Spectator (15 Oct'96) 526.
27. Mathews 139.
28. R. Kipling, Stalky & Co (1899,1962)230. Harmsworth also admired Kipling.
29. Anon. review, Spectator (15 Oct'98) 525-6.
30. Henley xxi.
31. Steevens, Kitchener 70-1.
32. Blackburn 165.
33. G.W. Steevens, The Downfall of Mahdism (Aldershot Military Society 1898). Aldershot, "the Home of the British Army", had the largest concentration of army officers in the Empire. The Aldershot Military Society was established in 1887 with the patronage of the Queen and the Duke of Connaught, for "stimulating professional interest by...discussion and lectures on the current military topics of the day", and many distinguished officers attended, Anon, The Prince Consort's Library 1860-1960 (1960) 16-17.



7.     'IN INDIA'

"Gentlemen come from England, spend a few weeks in India, walk round this great Sphinx of the Plains, and write books upon its ways and works, denouncing or praising it as their own ignorance prompts"

Kipling,  
'On the City Wall'

In the winter of 1898 to '99 Steevens reported on India, then from his reports compiled In India (1899).<sup>1</sup> His reporting was not investigation but travelogue, impressions, vignettes and opinion, an apologia for the Raj: "we have administered it with a single-minded devotion to the interests of its people which has never had a parallel"(353). He praised the British, especially those on the frontier. He castigated Indian lying, corruption, inefficiency, babus, politicians and press.<sup>2</sup> He praised Indian soldiers and especially their British officers. He noted the importance of India to the British army - "to find the real British army you must go to India"(49) - and the scale of manoeuvres. He considered defence and frontier policy, warning of the threat, increased by railway construction, of Russian invasion, advocating a forward policy, holding Chitral and fighting Russian invasion in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> He claimed there was no longer risk of a Mutiny and that the army in India should be modernised and concentrated. He suggested that in the long term the British had to choose between conscription and the loss of India.<sup>4</sup> He again expressed his bellicist values: "War was the salt that kept India from decay"(356). His views were Anglo-Indian

orthodoxy, largely similar to those of Kipling.<sup>5</sup> His views on defence were those orthodox among senior officers there, and assiduously propagated by Roberts.<sup>6</sup> His coverage had 'new journalism' vividness of superficiality and, like his other overseas reporting, showed the limitations of the briefly-visiting journalist.<sup>7</sup> Psychologists have recognised the stages of 'culture shock' in a foreign country: initial excitement and pleasure, then angry criticism at strangeness and frustration, and finally adjustment. Steevens arguably was never long enough in a new country to pass the second stage and so, psychologically as well as from paucity of information, was incapable of calm, reasoned and informed appraisal. Instead he again wrote his diatribes and clichés, which so expressed the attitudes of his readers. His book was favourably reviewed: for example, the Morning Post praised its "brightly coloured word-pictures".

## 7. IN INDIA: NOTES

1. G.W. Steevens, In India (1899); page references to this.
2. e.g. ib 75-101, 168, 349. Cf Woodville 98-9.
3. Ib 234-41.
4. Ib 241. However, arguably Indian independence resulted in the continued British conscription after the Second World War.
5. e.g. 'The Head of the District' in Life's Handicap (1891).
6. Examples of Roberts' Indian defence propaganda were in his relations with Dilke and Spenser Wilkinson: see his letters to them in the Roberts Papers (N.A.M.), Dilke Papers (BL) and Wilkinson Papers (Army Museums Ogilby Trust, Aldershot). They reproduced his ideas on Indian defence, sometimes almost verbatim from his letters, in their publications notably C.W. Dilke, Problems of Greater Britain (1890) and C.W. Dilke and H. Spenser Wilkinson, Imperial Defence (1892). See also F. Roberts, Forty-One Years in India (1897).
7. See Malcolm Muggeridge, 'The Eye-Witness Fallacy', Encounter (May 1961) 86-9.

## 8. 1890s ARTICLES

In the 1890s Steevens wrote a variety of journalism which included descriptive reportage for the Daily Mail and longer, weightier pieces for the serious reviews.<sup>1</sup> For the Mail he wrote impressionistic pieces on horse races, hospitals, prisons and Ireland.<sup>2</sup> His articles were dogmatic and expressed the modernity on which he prided himself, his quality of being in tune with the latest ideas, which both blinkered him and contributed to his popular appeal. In 1893 he published 'The Futile Don', a hyperbolic piece claiming Oxford and Cambridge dons were so remote they were as dead. For Henley's New Review he assessed Balfour's philosophy, praised Ibsen and Zola, and criticised Wagner. The belief that war was unnecessary and preventable and that disputes could be settled by peaceful arbitration, was fundamental to 18th century rationalism and to the 19th century liberalism and pacifism that grew from it.<sup>3</sup> Since the early 19th century the Peace Society and other pacifists, and Cobdenite and Gladstonian Liberals, advocated international arbitration. It was increasingly used, for frontier, territorial and fishery disputes, by Britain, despite the 'Alabama' decision and mostly for colonial disputes, more than any other state.<sup>4</sup> Between 1880 and 1900 there were ninety arbitrations.<sup>5</sup> In the late 19th century, partly in response to the increased financial burden of armaments, international hostility and continental militarism, British advocates of arbitration renewed their efforts.<sup>6</sup> In his short anonymous article in Blackwood's of October 1896, 'Arbitration in Theory and Practice', Steevens argued against international arbitration.<sup>7</sup> He

noted in democratic politics the rise and decline, like that of popular songs, of catch-words like "municipalization". That year arbitration was presented as, "the herald of every blessing...on the altar of the same holy cause the 'Daily Chronicle' is willing to sacrifice all that nations hold worth fighting for".<sup>8</sup> It became popular for no reason: "Why did the whole world sing 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay'?"<sup>9</sup> Earlier arbitrations had left bitter memories and, "in some cases, such as that of Delagoa Bay, its legacy may be more perilous than that of war".<sup>10</sup> Experience showed arbitration was not impartial and, since most states disliked Britain, they would arbitrate against her. Reliance on arbitration would lead to military weakness, so provoking foreign aggression, while lack of military preparation could also, in a democracy, decrease apprehension of war and so facilitate ignorant bellicosity, as recently in the United States, or a hot-headed rush into wanton hostilities. There was neither agreed international morality nor international law. Arbitration on issues believed vital would not be accepted if contrary to national interest, while issues not perceived as vital did not need arbitration to prevent war: "Modern war is its own deterrent".<sup>11</sup> Steevens' article was in part his response to the 1896 foreign threats to Britain and the Empire: the Morning Post wrote, "We have no friends and nobody loves us".<sup>12</sup> Though short, his article was significant as a statement of his view of international relations, the role of armaments and the maintenance of peace. He shared the widespread belief that arbitration, most notably on the 'Alabama', had been disadvantageous to Britain. He also shared the 'hard-minded',

sometimes cynical, social-darwinist realpolitik assumptions of his fellow imperialists, including rejection of 'moralising internationalism',<sup>13</sup> and belief that only force could defend national interests from hostile predatory foreigners, that weakness invited attack and that arbitration on vital interests was contrary to national interest.<sup>14</sup> Steevens' emphasis on the irrational in mass politics, traditionally part of tory contempt for democracy, was becoming increasingly prevalent among political commentators and was used by anti-imperialist radicals to explain the popularity of imperialism, notably, a few years later, by J.A. Hobson in The Psychology of Jingoism.<sup>15</sup> Steevens' attitudes to international relations and to arbitration and his criticism of the Daily Chronicle, further showed his divergence from his family's nonconformity and from the Gladstonian Liberals he had once supported.

Proudly monarchist, patriotic and imperialist, the newly-established Daily Mail shared the popular enthusiasm for the 1897 Jubilee. Steevens described the Jubilee procession with prolonged panegyric on the British imperial forces. He praised the navy as "the finest force in the whole world".<sup>16</sup> He praised Roberts, British officers, the British nation and its imperial achievement: "And each one of us...is a working part of this world-shaping force".<sup>17</sup> He praised the colonial statesmen, "the men who are building up great nations, new big Englands on the other side of the world".<sup>18</sup> He also enthusiastically described the Jubilee naval review, "the most wonderful assemblage of sea power there had even been",<sup>19</sup> and claimed the navy held the

Empire together. Yet he warned of the fleet's vulnerability, that torpedoes, flying-machines and turbine-craft might destroy battleships: "All the tons of steel, the labour of years, the millions of money...gone in five minutes. That is the pathos and beauty of a warship: it is so very strong and so very weak".<sup>20</sup> His other Jubilee article, 'To view the illuminations' was different: a fictional sketch of an agricultural family visiting London, a patronising 'humorous' piece. Despite his eulogies of the British, Steevens was ignorant and contemptuous of those he considered his social inferiors.<sup>21</sup> He was proud he was a Londoner, and in 1899 wrote for the Mail a series of articles on aspects of London: vivid, interesting reportage but largely superficial impressions, not investigative or crusading journalism.<sup>22</sup> He was insufficiently curious, and omitted and distorted. For example, writing on London at night he did not mention prostitution.

His two Blackwood's articles, 'The New Humanitarianism' and 'From the New Gibbon' were crucial for understanding him and his message. In 'The New Humanitarianism' published in January 1898, he claimed that since the early 19th century the British had changed their values and become too tender-minded and soft, obsessed with the avoidance of physical pain and believing that, "death and pain are the worst of evils, their elimination the most desirable of goods".<sup>23</sup> He cited opposition to hunting, vivisection and vaccination, and concern for prisoners, cripples and incubator-babies.<sup>24</sup> He denounced faddists and fashionable cant and asserted that, "the same blind horror of physical

pain may be found at the bottom of half the 'isms of the day".<sup>25</sup> Such attitudes were "throttling patriotism and common-sense and virility of individual character".<sup>26</sup> His article harshly asserted his continuing rejection of his family's nonconformity, and asserted his tough-minded social darwinism.

His 'From the New Gibbon' in Blackwood's of February 1899 was a fin-de-siècle jeremiad on the decadence of the British, in the form of a history written in some indefinite future, a literary device popularised by the future-war genre from Chesney's Battle of Dorking on.<sup>27</sup> It told how at the end of the 19th century Britain had great prosperity and empire, but within were "the latent causes of decay and corruption".<sup>28</sup> The British were excessively concerned with cheapness and profit, and saw the Empire as a means of money-making: "Where they had once resolved to possess, they now aspired but to trade".<sup>29</sup> He especially criticised Chamberlain for believing "British Empire was synonymous with British commerce".<sup>30</sup> Ironically, however, at the same time British commercial efficiency and competitiveness was declining, as "the degeneracy of the people" spread to commerce. Insufficiently educated, insufficiently dynamic, retaining, ostrich-like, obsolete practices and failing to adapt to customer's requirements, they were losing to German, Belgian and American competition, and some foresaw economic disaster. Free trade principles were undermining Britain. They ruined agriculture and drove the population to the towns, where "the pestilential circumstances of an unnatural existence" caused "this hideous process of degeneration".<sup>31</sup> History showed



national defence depended on "the preservation of a robust and high-spirited peasantry".<sup>32</sup> British farm workers had the qualities necessary for soldiers, but the industrial population did not. They were "feeble in body, insubordinate in temper, and habituated by experience to a mode of life which rendered them awkward and discontented in the field".<sup>33</sup> In sport also the British rapidly degenerated, with the rise of spectator sports. The "prevailing deterioration" affected poor and rich. No longer with happy homes, the poor went to public houses, while smart society was arrogant, vulgar and scandalous, the women painted and immodest. Literature was mediocre and periodicals trivial. Then as "the warlike and manly force of the white races succumbed to the enervating influence of industrial civilisation", British governments relied increasingly on non-white colonial mercenaries, "subject barbarians".<sup>34</sup> So, "The British Empire entered upon the twentieth century under the gloomiest auspices".<sup>35</sup> Most contemporaries did not realise it, but its fall was impending. It lacked men: "Britain was indeed peopled by a race of pigmies, and the puny breed awaited only the onset of the first crisis to become the woeful patient of defeat and ruin".<sup>36</sup>

The 'New Gibbon' was a jeremiad in the tradition of Carlyle, who in Steevens' formative years was still admired and influential as a prophet and for his prose style. Carlyle also had hyperbolically looked back to a superior past and denounced British materialism, commercialism and decadence, and had praised strong heroic leaders. The

'New Gibbon' was not a consistent political statement but a series of disparate reactions - some current prejudices and myths and some valid if unoriginal comment - to changes he he disliked, grouped round the theme of degeneration. Central to it was his conviction, as in the Graeco-Turkish war that, rather than economics or matériel, the martial qualities of the fighting soldiers were crucial in war. Like the purposive future-war fiction, it was intended as warning. It was hyperbolic and in parts historically inaccurate. His section on attitudes to empire reversed history: the trade-based 'informal empire' was followed by possession, not desire for possession replaced by desire for trade. His attitudes were typical not original. His was one expression among many of late 19th century pessimism and anxiety at the trends and possible future of Britain, a response to perceptions of Britain's relative decline and of foreign hostility and threats. Concern at urban deterioration and urban inferiority to rural population was widespread and was expressed in Europe and in the United States, notably by Roosevelt. The German military authorities believed urban recruits physically and morally inferior and also socialist and subversive, and so conscripted disproportionately from rural areas. In Britain it was frequently expressed,<sup>37</sup> including by Booth and, in fiction, by Wells' Time Machine. Cardwell had attempted to reverse the decline in rural recruiting<sup>38</sup> and the military implications of urbanization were publicised, including by purposive fiction of future war. In 1882, for example, Colonel William Butler published anonymously his Invasion of England in which Britain, weakened by rural

depopulation and urban "physical and moral degeneration", was invaded and defeated by Germany. He denounced "the national greed for money and...the spirit of mercantilism" and, "all the corruptions and contaminations inseparable from the life of large cities; the gutter became the cradle, the brothel became the school, the gin palace was the recreation-ground of millions of human beings whose natural homes had been the furze-clad hills and smiling valleys of the country".<sup>39</sup> Urban soldiers were inadequate; Majuba resulted from the replacement of highlanders by "the modern sweepings of Lowland cities".<sup>40</sup> W.H. Russell also warned of the decline in the physical quality of recruits. There were also warnings in the serious reviews. For example, in 1887 Lord Brabazon published a short article in the Nineteenth Century, 'Decay of Bodily Strength in Towns'. He cited army recruit-rejection rates and claimed there was a horrifying physical degeneration of the urban population, endangering Britain economically and militarily, "an evil which would ultimately lead to a degeneration of the race and to national effacement",<sup>41</sup> and he called for reforms. Others also saw the connection between the condition of the urban masses and British power. Moreover, there was also a wider consciousness of malaise, and pessimism and anxiety about the imperial future expressed, for example, in Kipling's 'Recessional'. In his 'New Gibbon' Steevens was expressing ideas already current and which were to reach a crescendo during and after the Boer War, and which were further publicised by the advocates of 'Efficiency', the radical Right and the National Service League.

Steevens' view of colonial troops was exceptional and probably original. Like his contemporaries he had been impressed by native troops and praised the Jubilee contingents and the Indian army. He had argued the military advantage of the Sudan reconquest in providing potential recruits. The usual view of native troops - in defence studies and in future-war fiction such as Le Queux's Great War in England in 1897 - was that they strengthened imperial defence. H.G. Wells, however, in his 1899 dystopia of a distant future, When the Sleeper Wakes described South African black mercenaries used by a tyrannical government to suppress revolution in England: an exceptional view of their potential. Classically-educated and modelling his article on Gibbon, Steevens like so many of his contemporaries, saw the fate of Britain as analagous with that of Rome and so, though his main argument was on the deterioration of British troops, suggested the potential of colonial barbarians as a related threat. Though eulogistic accounts of Steevens by his friends praised his sweetness and kindness, the persona expressed in his writing was different: callous, harsh and vindictive, unsympathetic and lacking compassion. It had similarities to that expressed in Kipling's writings and was presumably at least in part a response to his awareness of British vulnerability and the necessity of increased strength. Contemporaries praised his articles and the selection published after his death in the Memorial Edition was favourably reviewed. The Spectator, for example, noted the literary superiority of his articles for the reviews over his Mail journalism and books compiled from it, praised his "sense of remarkable

papers on the Jubilee" and eulogised his 'New Gibbon' as a "brilliant tour de force".<sup>42</sup>

#### 8. 1890s ARTICLES

1. His articles considered most important were reprinted after his death in the Memorial Edition, in Things Seen (1900) and Glimpses of Three Nations (1901). Reprinted articles are cited from the Memorial Edition, unreprinted from the original publication.
2. His views on hospitals and pauperization were similar to his wife's, Mrs. Steevens 87-97.
3. Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man (1791); Frederick Pollard, 'The modern law of nations and prevention of war' NCMHXII; Michael Howard, War and the Liberal Conscience (1978)21-58; Best, Honour, 45-6. Radical emphasis was on preventing war by changing society, rather than arbitration.
- 4,5. 'Arbitration, International', EB II 328.
6. Brian Bond, War and Society in Europe 1870-1970 (1984)57.
7. Anon (G.W. Steevens), 'Arbitration in Theory and Practice', Blackwoods CLX (Oct.'96) 572-84.
8. Ib 572.
9. Ib 573.
10. Ib 572.
11. Ib 584.
12. Quo Morris, Scaremongers 13.
13. Barnett, Collapse 50.

14. C.W. Dilke & Spenser Wilkinson, Imperial Defence (1897) 8-16; S. Wilkinson, War and Policy (1900) 331; Britain at Bay (1909) 28-32.
15. Cf the works of Norman Angell.
16. Steevens, Things Seen 193.
17. Ib 194.
18. Ib 193.
19. Ib 211.
20. Ib 215.
21. His wife, while advocating class-harmony, partly to prevent socialism, expressed similar attitudes to those she considered social inferiors, Mrs. Steevens passim.
22. Reprinted as 'London' in Glimpses of Three Nations.
23. Steevens, 'The New Humanitarianism', Blackwood's (Jan '98), Things Seen 2.
24. His wife expressed similar attitudes towards the breeding and preservation of the unfit in her Pall Mall Gazette articles, Mrs. Steevens 94-5. Vivisection and vaccination were controversial and emotional issues; v Carol Lansbury, 'Gynaecology, pornography and the antivivisection movement' Vic.Stud. 28(1985) 413-37. Vaccination, compulsory from 1853, was opposed by a vociferous 'anti-vaccination' movement. A Royal Commission was appointed in 1889 and reported in 1896; in 1898 parents were permitted 'conscientious objection'.
25. Steevens, ib 7. Criticism of faddists was a recurring theme of late 19th conservative writing e.g. T.P.W., 'Woman in Politics', Blackwood's CLXI (March '97) 342.
26. Steevens, ib 10.
27. British decadence was a recurring theme in future-war fiction, from The Battle of Dorking on.

28. Steevens, 'From the New Gibbon', Blackwood's (Feb.99).  
Things 23.
- 29,30. Ib 24.
- 31,32. Ib 27. His wife also asserted the superiority of rural over urban life; she advocated urban poor children being sent to live in the country, Mrs. Steevens 105-13. Rural superiority was a recurrent theme of 19th century literature e.g. Wordsworth, Hardy. Related to this was the belief in the superiority of colonial frontier life expressed by imperialists e.g. Baden-Powell.
- 33,34. Ib 28.
- 35,36. Ib 36.
37. Gareth Steadman-Jones, Outcast London (1976)127-56;  
M.R. Booth, 'The Metropolis on Stage', (ed) H.J. Dyos  
& Michael Wolff, The Victorian City I (1976) 215-7.
38. Skelley 273.
39. An Old Soldier (W.F. Butler), The Invasion of England  
(1882)15. Cf Arnold White, Efficiency and Empire  
(1901) 94-121.
40. Ib 31.
41. Lord Brabazon, 'Decay of Bodily Strength in Towns',  
Nineteenth C. (May '87) 674.
42. Anon review of Things Seen, Spectator (23 June 1900)  
877.

## 9. THE BOER WAR

The South African crisis and the Boer War caused much press activity. Harmsworth, imperialist and intensely competitive,<sup>1</sup> sent correspondents, hired trains and called them Daily Mail war expresses, launched the "Absent-Minded Beggar" Fund, and later, when he learned of them, criticised War Office faults including the inadequate medical services.<sup>2</sup> He sent his star writer Steevens, famous from the Sudan and still under thirty though looking older, as his "chief special".<sup>3</sup> Steevens arrived in South Africa in October, less than a fortnight before the war began. He arrived too late, knowing too little. Comparison with Leopold Amery showed Steevens' disadvantages. Amery, another brilliant Balliol man, Oxford fellow turned journalist and former correspondent in Germany, went to South Africa as The Times chief correspondent, arriving in September.<sup>4</sup> He travelled, met Milner, Rhodes, Cape politicians and Boer leaders including Kruger, and visited Joubert and the Boer army. After the war began he travelled more, meeting the British commanders and seeing British troops in action. Steevens, however, arrived too late to travel much, never visited Boer territory and, lacking the status and contacts of The Times correspondent, failed to make adequate contact with the British decision-makers. Moreover, possibly like the contemporary British army, he had had too many easy victories and grown slack. In the Sudan he had much time and a relatively simple subject and his observation and vivid personalised writing - despite the superficiality of his knowledge - had brought him success. In South Africa he



faced a bigger more complex subject, for which verbal snapshots were inadequate, and which he did not research. He arrived too ignorant and started reporting too soon. Then the war began and he was caught in events he inadequately understood, and in a position where he could not gain an adequate perspective. He reported on the Cape before the war, and the battles of Elandslaagte and Nicholson's Nek. At Elandslaagte, though he did not report this, leading a conspicuous white pony he continually exposed himself - whether deliberately, is unknown - and drew Boer artillery fire.<sup>5</sup> When Ladysmith was besieged he decided to stay there, like Melton Prior and other correspondents but unlike the veteran Bennet Burleigh of the Telegraph who knew he would see more of the war if he were mobile. The correspondents had to send their reports through the Boer lines by native runner, at high prices: Steevens paid seventy pounds to his first runner.<sup>6</sup> He became increasingly bored and frustrated. With other correspondents he published The Ladysmith Lyre, a thin tabloid spoof newspaper which claimed, "Our news we guarantee to be false. In the preparation of falsehoods we shall spare no effort and no expense".<sup>7</sup> He visited the wounded and sick to cheer and encourage them. Ladysmith had many cases of enteric and dysentery and a high mortality from them. He contracted enteric and in January 1900 died, bravely.<sup>8</sup> He was one of several correspondents who died in the war, and more preparation might have prevented his death, since inoculation was available.<sup>9</sup>

Until the siege he was never able to offer more than superficial impressions. He was typical of most corres-

pondents in largely ignoring the non-Europeans and their role in the war. His evaluation of the Bantu lacked depth: "The niggers are very good-humoured, like the darkies of America"(3). Possibly his racial opinions predisposed him towards a relatively favourable attitude to the Boers. He knew little of them. He had time for only a few brief interviews - including with a Dopper pastor who told him a Boer view of South African history - before the war started, and then he saw them, the enemy, from a distance, or briefly as prisoners of war. In the Sudan he had loathed the Mahdists, but his South African reporting was not hostile to the Boers and, like that of Amery and others, showed his respect for them: "They were manly and courteous, and through their untrimmed beards and rough corduroys a voice said very plainly, 'Ruling race'"(64). He praised their military qualities, especially their shooting, and believed British soldiers should learn from them. He alleged no atrocities, and praised their treatment of British prisoners of war. He noted, however, their relative inefficiency against Ladysmith, their limited bombardments and failure to attack, "But the Boers have the great defect of all amateur soldiers: they love their ease, and do not mean to be killed"(101-2). In Capetown he saw British miners from the Rand, returning to England. He showed his ignorance and inadequate investigation by his remark that they "only wanted to make a hundred pounds to furnish a cottage and marry a girl"(8). Just as, in his Sudan reporting, unlike Kipling, he hardly bothered with the army rankers except when fighting or for occasional colour, so he was ignorant of those he regarded as his social inferiors in Britain.

A middle-class man might furnish his house for a hundred pounds: the same sum could buy an entire working-class cottage.

Steevens' own attitude to the Boer War is uncertain, but his reporting did not question its rightness. Despite his and his employer's imperialism and in contrast to his condemnation of the Mahdists, his South African reporting, excepting praise of British soldiers and sailors, was relatively unpropagandist. The Sudan had been a simple war, easy to understand and describe. The Boer War was complex, confusing, inconclusive and seemingly lacking a clear pattern. He apparently failed to comprehend the war as a whole, and admitted,

"I too was lost, and lost I remain...My small experience has been confined to wars you could put your fingers on: for this war I have been looking long enough, and have not found it. I have been accustomed to wars with headquarters, at any rate to wars with a main body and a concerted plan: but this war in Cape Colony has neither"(14).

In his Sudan reporting he had a theme and a message. In South Africa he had neither, but floundered apparently overwhelmed by events he insufficiently understood. Unlike Amery he did not see British military faults as the theme and the necessity of military reform as the message. In the Sudan he had eulogised British commanders, and praised British troops and achievement. In South Africa his tone was different. He still praised British officers and men,

but saw no British achievement. British generals were strangely absent from his account. White commanded at Ladysmith. Though praised by the popular press and later mobbed by London crowds as the "hero of Ladysmith", he was an ineffective commander, dispirited and passive. He was criticised by others but not, in writing, by Steevens. Steevens hardly mentioned him; Bullard later noted that Steevens was "not given to censure".<sup>10</sup> His criticism was by implication or omission. He noted British military unpreparedness and vulnerability in South Africa at the beginning of the war before the army corps arrived, repeatedly noted the inferiority of most British artillery to that of the Boers. However, he praised colonial troops, and the Navy.

In the late 19th century as Britain and the Empire seemed more threatened, so imperialists looked more to the Empire to contribute to defence, and the press and books increasingly featured Indian and colonial units. In the Boer War the press repeatedly praised colonial troops, later sometimes contrasting their qualities with British military ineptitude - a theme of Kipling's verse. Steevens praised colonial troops. He described the Border Mounted Rifles as, "swift and cunning as Boers, and far braver, they are the heaven-sent type of irregular troopers"(68). The British were proud of their Navy and of the exploits of the 19th century naval brigades, though Colomb and Fisher believed they wasted naval manpower doing soldiers' work.<sup>11</sup> The naval brigades in the Boer War, like their predecessors, gained much press and public attention, and Captain Percy Scott of the 'Terrible' became famous. At

a time of army failure, the press emphasised naval achievement. Steevens praised the naval contingent at Ladysmith. There most of the British guns were small and obsolescent, "as useless as catapults"(p100), outranged by the newer Boer guns. Only the six naval guns had the range to answer them. The last report he wrote, in December, praised the naval gunners and their high morale: "Trust the sailor to keep his self-respect, even in five weeks' beleaguered Ladysmith"(p135). The naval contingent was crucial, maintaining morale by replying to the Boer bombardment: "this handful of sailors have been the saving of Ladysmith. You don't know, till you have tried it, what a worm you feel when the enemy is plugging shell into you and you can't possibly plug back"(p141). He claimed that, "The Royal Navy is the salt of the sea and the salt of the earth also"(p143).

Description of battle was considered the supreme task and test of the war correspondent. In October 1900 he witnessed the battle of Elandslaagte. He described briefly the arrival of the British troops, the accuracy of the Boer guns, outranging the British, and the noise. Sometimes he wrote cliché: "the first gun barked death"(p48). He noted the inconspicuousness of the khaki-uniformed British and described the infantry attack emphasising the intensity of the Boer rifle fire, and its results,

"on the stone-pitted hill-face burst loose that other storm - the storm of lead, of blood, of death. Men stopped and started, staggered and dropped limply as if the string were cut that held them upright"(p53).

He described the continued advance, the sounds of battle - "the pipes shrieked of blood and the lust of glorious death" and the confusion with units, "all mixed, inextricably...all drunk with battle, shoving through hell to the throat of the enemy"(54). He described the cavalry pursuit: "There also - thank Heaven, thank Heaven! - were squadrons of Lancers and Dragoon Guards storming in among them, shouting, spearing, stamping them into the ground"(25). He noted the intensity of the battle experience, "half an hour crammed with the life of half a life-time"(ib). He had conveyed something of the movement and confusion of battle, and the intensity of Boer fire. Yet his was an outsider's impression, distanced, of the sight and sound of battle; an incomplete picture, largely failing to convey the battle as soldiers' experience, or the human cost, the wounds and suffering and dying. While identifying with his compatriots and rejoicing at the cavalry pursuit, he lacked the exultation of the Athara. He neither questioned nor criticised British tactics, the massed attack into enemy rifle fire. He then described the aftermath of the battle, after nightfall: the confusion, the cries of the wounded, the single doctor treating them, and the soldiers' good treatment of the Boer wounded and other prisoners. Again he gave a vivid but incomplete account. He hinted, but failed to describe the condition of the wounded: his description conveyed far less than had Churchill's of the 21st Lancers after their Omdurman charge. He noted the inadequacy of medical provision, but neither questioned nor criticised. Later, reporting Nicholson's Nek, he emphasised the humiliation of the defeat: "The cursed white flag was up again over a British

force in South Africa...What bitter shame for the camp! All ashamed for England!"(79-80). Again he did not question, criticise or blame - British generalship, reconnaissance or tactics - nor attempt to learn lessons from it.

Much of his Boer War reporting was of the siege of Ladysmith. He described, initially jocularly, the bombardment and its ineffectiveness - "a hollow terror" - and the pompom's ineffectiveness. Rifle fire was decisive: "there is nothing to stir the blood like rifle-fire. Rifle-fire wins or loses decisive actions"(106). The Boers tried to shoot officers: "Their riflemen would follow an officer about all day with shots at 2200 yards"(110). That it was unwise for officers to continue so dressed and accoutred that they could be identified over a mile away was a conclusion reached by some officers during the war, but not by Steevens. While, unlike Amery, Wilkinson and others writing on the war, he deduced no lessons from it, he noted that the British infantry were learning from their experience: "When this siege is over this force ought to be the best fighting men in the world. We are learning lessons every day from the Boer...nothing but being shot at will ever teach men the art of using cover, but they get plenty of that nowadays"(117). They had learned to use thin firing lines of good shots, with supports sheltering hidden. The gunners like the Boers split their batteries, and sheltered except when firing.

Confined in Ladysmith by the siege that dragged on apparently indefinitely, he wrote of his own emotions.

His morale sagged. He was not apparently in danger, neither in combat nor near the front line and, as he emphasised, the bombardment killed few. He was apparently unconcerned at the danger of disease. On his travels he had risked disease - indeed, such killer diseases as typhoid and tuberculosis were still relatively common in Britain - and had survived. He had no real function: his function was to report, and there was nothing new to report. He visited the sick and wounded to cheer and encourage them. Yet for all his qualities and knowledge of philosophies - unlike the cheerful philistine Melton Prior<sup>12</sup> - apparently he lacked the inner resources to cope with the experience of Ladysmith. He repeatedly lamented the dullness of the siege, such that he almost welcomed enemy shelling: "it was almost a relief. At anyrate it was something to see and listen to"(¶116). He wrote, "I am sick of it. Everybody is sick of it...a weary, weary, weary bore...I feel it will never end"(¶125). He felt imprisoned, isolated from the world, "Nothing to do but endure"(¶133). He missed his accustomed life of bustle and change, of familiar persons and new assignments. He felt homesick. The sound of a telephone bell momentarily brought images of home: "The mountains and the guns went out, and there floated in that roaring office of the 'Daily Mail' instead, and the warm, rustling vestibule of the playhouse on a December night"(¶138).

British politicians, press and public were divided on the Boer War. Steevens' view of the justice, or injustice of the British cause was presumably influenced by his political beliefs and affected his entire attitudes to the war. His political allegiance, if any, in his latter years



was not explicit in his writings, and is uncertain. Gladstonianism was the creed of 'Little Englanders' and possibly Steevens' increased experience of other countries, together with the influence and possible constraint of Conservative friends and employers and of his own prosperity, eroded his schoolboy and undergraduate radicalism. While party-political allegiance may shape a person's attitude to defence, his concern with defence may change his political allegiance, as with Spenser Wilkinson, and Steevens' increased defence awareness probably also influenced his wider politics. His attitudes to war, defence, naval expenditure, arbitration, social darwinism, party politicians, free trade and agriculture, Turks, Greeks, Armenians and Indian politicians, all showed his divergence from the Gladstonianism of his youth. Such attitudes were largely held by the 'new' Right of constructive imperialists, a significant number of whom - including Chamberlain, Milner, Strachey, Arnold White and Spenser Wilkinson - had been Liberals.<sup>13</sup> However, Steevens did not always agree with them and he criticised Chamberlain's imperialism. His views, though possibly more bellicist than most, were also similar to those of the defence-minded Liberal Imperialists, including Dilke who could not see his way clearly on the Boer War. Steevens, unlike his wife, in his writing did not condemn socialism, and possibly might have had a vague lingering sympathy for it, but he did not advocate reforms other than for economic competitiveness and defence. Rushing from assignment to assignment, from book to book, possibly he did not have time, or inclination, to formulate a coherent political philosophy, but rather retained a set of disparate, possibly ambiguous, responses to specific causes and issues.

Steevens' own view of the causes and justice of the Boer War is not known, and he did not state it in his reports. After his death one of his Oxford friends wrote that before the war they had discussed it and, "I dare not tell his views on the political question of the war. They would surprise most of his friends and admirers".<sup>14</sup> In March 1900 the Athenaeum's anonymous reviewer, believed to be its proprietor Dilke, infuriated Henley by alleging Steevens' private opinions had differed from the message of his journalism, that he had remained a political radical "attached to peace" throughout his "warlike and even Jingo writing for the Daily Mail" and that privately he had "dissented at heart from the whole policy of the war".<sup>15</sup> Henley wrote privately that Dilke was "a bloody liar" for thus alleging Steevens was a hypocrite, which he was not.<sup>16</sup> In his valedictory 'Memoir' Henley wrote that he had read allegations that Steevens did not approve British policy in the Sudan or South Africa, but wrote to please the public. Henley, "as one who knew him intimately", indignantly denied this: "He was too good an Englishman and too poor a hypocrite".<sup>17</sup> From the evidence of Steevens' writings, Henley was most probably right about his attitude to the Sudan. His attitude to the Boer War is more problematic. Possibly Henley knew him less well than he thought and Steevens, knowing Henley's imperialism and commitment to British policy in South Africa - Henley called Kruger "mad and criminal"<sup>18</sup> - chose not to disillusion his old friend and benefactor. Possibly, knowing Harmsworth's ruthlessness in sacking, and the dependence of his wife and himself on Harmsworth's erratic goodwill, Steevens may have made the

mental adjustment which enabled journalists to work for papers whose politics differed from their own; as Max Pemberton, experienced journalist and Harmsworth's employee, later wrote, "I do not find men so ready to fight with their bread and butter".<sup>19</sup> This is conjectural. Steevens had earlier in 1899 in his 'New Gibbon' denounced Chamberlain's imperialism. His reporting of the war suggested that he may have disagreed with it or had reservations. Unlike in his Sudan book, he had no clear message. He was silent on the background, causes, justification and possible results of the war, and did not condemn the Boers. He praised the British troops and lamented their defeats, but was silent on the British commanders. He did not analyse or criticise. Though not fully comparable as his Sudan book was a finished work and his Boer War reporting an uncompleted series of despatches, the similarities and contrasts between the two are indicative of his attitudes. In both he identified with and praised the British forces, assumed British superiority over natives, and accepted the warrior ethos. In his Sudan book he placed the campaign in its historical context, and presented it as moving inexorably towards its final goal: the campaign was British victories, and the regime they destroyed was evil. He eulogised the British commanders, especially Kitchener, reinforcing the Victorian public's view of successful generals as heroes. His reporting of the Boer War was different, almost the opposite. Possibly he had started with doubts as to the justification of the war then become disillusioned with its conduct, but felt unable to state this, possibly from loyalty when the war was so obviously

unsuccessful. The certainty of his Sudan reporting had gone. He conveyed no sense of purpose or achievement. He was less interested than in the Sudan campaign, which had fascinated him. He ignored the British commanders. He identified with the Sudan campaign but apparently never came to terms with the Boer War. Possibly had he survived he might have become a 'pro-Boer' or, like Amery, a military reformer. Possibly, trapped in the immediacy of his own experience, he could not yet see clearly and decide.

Possibly partly from lack of motivation, he was a flawed reporter of the war. Omitting historical context, his work lacked depth. He failed to investigate, analyse and criticise. He omitted much. He showed the effect of firepower, and the changing British tactics, but largely ignored other ranks and hardly showed the horror and suffering. He presented vivid, but partial and superficial, impressions, and his impressions were insufficient by themselves to adequately describe a war such as the Boer War. Myopic and unperceptive, he portrayed a war without shape. More could reasonably have been expected of a man of his ability, advantages and experience. Possibly had he survived he might have written a different better book. After his death his reports were hastily compiled into a book, "an unfinished record", From Capetown to Ladysmith, which was favourably reviewed. As a reporter of the war and contemporary historian he proved inadequate. Yet he is significant because he wrote for the paper with the highest daily circulation, because his books were widely read and because he was so highly regarded by contemporaries.

## 9. THE BOER WAR: NOTES

1. Pemberton 75.
2. Pound & Harmsworth 251-2.
3. After his death his reports were reprinted in (ed) Vernon Blackburn, G.W. Steevens, From Capetown to Ladysmith (1900): page references to this.
4. L.S. Amery, My Political Life I (1953) 101-40.
5. Lionel James, High Pressure (1929) 118-20, Field 178.
6. Prior 300. Prices were high partly because of the risk: the Boers sometimes shot captured runners.
7. The Ladysmith Lyre (27 Nov'99) 1, copy in NAM. Others published another humorous paper, The Ladysmith Bomb-shell and there were similar papers in the other besieged towns.
8. On his death Pemberton 69-70 and, less plausible, Prior 300-1.
9. J. Barclay-Lloyd, One Thousand Miles with the C.I.V. (1901) 22, 75-7; Prior 238.
10. Bullard 319. Though the censor might have excised criticism, Steevens could have written it privately for his book. Harmsworth was willing to publish criticism of military faults.
11. Navy & Army Illustrated IX (9 Dec'99) 293.
12. Prior 291-305.
13. Kennedy, Antagonism 342.
14. Quo Blackburn 164.
15. Anon, 'Mr. Steevens' Last African Letters', Athenaeum (3 Mar 1900) 265, quo Field 184.
16. W.E. Henley to Charles Whibley (6 Mar 1900) quo Field 184.
17. Henley xvii.
18. Ib ix.
19. Pemberton 96: cf the later leftists who accepted Beaverbrook's cheques. On Harmsworth's sackings, Angell 123. After Steevens' death Harmsworth made "munificent provision" for his widow; £500 p.a. pension for life, Fyfe 90.

## 10. CONCLUSION: MESSAGE AND RESPONSES

Steevens, who won academic success then fame as a war correspondent, came from a family neither academic nor military but suburban lower middle class; higher in the gradations of Victorian snobbery than Wells', and aspiring to clerking rather than shop-walking. He was saved from Pooterdom by a scholarship at the City of London School. Academically brilliant, he won a Balliol scholarship and university success and could have had an academic career, but entered journalism. His 1893 article 'The Futile Don' expressed his reaction from academia and conviction that real life was elsewhere: he apparently overreacted, rejecting scholarly research criteria and so flawing his books after Naval Policy. Sympathetic, humorous, witty, exceptionally able and glowing with Oxonian kudos, he attracted patrons and helpers: the scholarship boy entered smart society. Befriended by Oscar Browning and by Henley he began his journalistic career at Cambridge, then on the Pall Mall Gazette. In 1896 he was launched into final success when Harmsworth employed him on the Daily Mail, then sent him on overseas star reporting assignments including the three wars. In his "aureum quinquennium" he produced an exceptionally large, varied and impressive oeuvre, and achieved fame.<sup>1</sup>

Steevens wrote much. His articles in the reviews, better written than his daily journalism, and his books - rather than his daily journalism - stated what he believed important, his chosen message. He gained fame as a descriptive writer, but his was seldom neutral description.

He had been a leader-writer and navalist propagandist, and he continued to dogmatise and persuade. At school, Oxford and Cambridge he had been a political radical. However as a London journalist he worked for Unionist papers and his message was minimally radical and became dominated by concerns of navalism and imperial defence. The Gladstonian schoolboy was succeeded by the imperialist, bellicist, social-darwinist adult. His social darwinism resulted from his experiences and the influences on him. The London lower middle class well knew that life was a struggle for survival. His school, if less immediately darwinist than Kipling's, and his college were intensely competitive. Classically educated and having rejected his family's Christianity, he was probably influenced by the harsh assumptions of antiquity, and he shared his generation's awareness of the Roman Empire analogy. He wrote at a time of increased international hostility and threat, with colonial, naval and economic rivalry and Britain having unusually bad relations with other great powers. Social darwinist declarations and "unspoken assumptions" were widespread and pervasive throughout Europe and the United States, with an effect of self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>2</sup> Traditional military ideology had much in common with social darwinism, and as a war correspondent he was probably further influenced by the officers with whom he campaigned. Forbes was sentimental, repeatedly referring back to childhood memories. Steevens, possibly because he was so young, was in his writings unsentimental and little concerned with the past, except insofar as he wanted to preserve traditional rural society not because of the past but because of the future. He was proud of his strenuous

unsentimental modernity, and wrote enthusiastically of machinery, Zola and Ibsen. Social darwinism - tough, unsentimental, modern and fashionable - fitted his predilections and his perception of Britain's need.

The continuing unifying theme of his writing was social darwinism: the assumptions of conflict, struggle, survival, deterioration or strengthening, victory or defeat and destruction.<sup>3</sup> It underlay his message on foreign states, international relations, arbitration, the navy, empire, race, social change and war. It underlay his suspicion, apparent pessimism and paranoia, and tendency to worst-case analyses of foreign intentions towards Britain. He saw international relations as conflict and stated that weakness invited others' aggression. He viewed foreign states primarily as rivals and threats or possible allies in the international struggle. He despised those nations and peoples he believed failures lacking the qualities necessary for the struggle. He condemned arbitration because states would fight for what they believed vital and because it was not impartial but a continuation of the struggle by another means, to Britain's disadvantage. He advocated a stronger navy as vital for defence against predatory foreign powers. He believed the Empire necessary for British survival in the great-power struggle, and British imperial expansion the triumph of the superior over the inferior: the Empire resulted from British fitness to be an imperial power. He shared the social-darwinist assumption of evolutionist racial hierarchy. He was proud of his own race, respectful of Americans, Germans and Boers, and contemptuous of those he believed inferior



and unfit: American negroes, Greeks and Egyptians. His social darwinism pervaded his writing on Britain. Holistic, he believed in the indivisibility of national life and that apparently non-military factors could weaken for the military struggle. He advocated national toughness and that the unfit should not be assisted to survive since this would weaken the nation. His tough-minded attitudes - and he apparently assumed that not to be tough-minded was a national and imperial betrayal - led to harsh and apparently callous and cynical views, in contrast to his own kindness in personal relationships, and to his condoning the Armenian massacres and his condemnation of faddists and pauperising. He emphasised morale: Britons had to be tough and tough-minded for Britain to be fit to survive. Sympathy and sentimentality were debilitating luxuries. Since weakness invited aggression Britain had to both be and appear to be strong. He attacked politicians who failed to prepare Britain for the struggle, and he despised his social inferiors when he believed inadequate, mentally and physically, for the struggle. He condemned rural depopulation and urbanization, despite his own affection for London, because they weakened the nation militarily. He warned that Britain was endangered by physical and moral deterioration. Like others, Steevens had mixed motives, prejudices and priorities. He did not proclaim "social darwinism" as such but his thinking and his message were based on its assumptions. It pervaded his writings: preparation for the struggle, especially military, was his continuing criterion. He was not totally and consistently social darwinist. His residual radicalism occasionally defeated

his ascendant social darwinism: in America he condemned the trusts and their crushing of the weak. He was also influenced by other popular attitudes and their acceptability to his readers. His justification of the Empire was based not only on British fitness to rule and the benefit to Britain, especially in military power, but also on the benefit to the subject peoples, "the white man's burden". While he condoned Turkish massacre of Armenians, he condemned on moral and humanitarian grounds Mahdist rule in the Sudan and so justified its destruction by the British. His praise of the British was possibly partly to counter his anxieties about the coming struggle; his emotion and diatribes because he saw Britain endangered and unprepared.

His social darwinism was apparently reinforced by the influence of Clausewitz, largely through Spenser Wilkinson. Clausewitz's emphasis on the nation, on moral forces and on war as the continuation of policy, all reinforced Steevens' convictions.<sup>4</sup> His bellicism was integral with his social darwinism. War was part of international relations and the ultimate test, for individuals and nations, of fitness to survive. One had to prepare and face the challenge, and accept the horrors of war. Overemphasis on them, rather than on war's positive attributes, might demoralise: the fighter and the nation needed inspiration and encouragement. He portrayed war as necessary, acceptable, heroic, challenging, exciting and adventurous: its negative aspects minimised and countered by its positive - the written equivalent of the Victorian battle painting.

Briefly at the end of the 19th century Steevens was probably the best known and possibly the most influential British journalist. Contemporaries exceptionally praised him and his writings. Journalists, soldiers, defence-publicists, navalists and imperialists; in private correspondence, memoirs, and obituaries in varied publications, eulogised him.<sup>5</sup> Kitchener described him as, "a model correspondent, the best I have ever known...a genius...he had real insight into military affairs".<sup>6</sup> E.S. May, who knew him at Ladysmith, wrote that of the correspondents he was "most gifted of all".<sup>7</sup> Harmsworth claimed his war correspondence "should be read by everyone commencing journalism".<sup>8</sup> The Spectator called With Kitchener to Khartum "a masterpiece".<sup>9</sup> Churchill described him as, "the most brilliant man in journalism I have ever met", and H.L. Mencken called him, "the greatest newspaper reporter who ever lived".<sup>10</sup> Other correspondents praised by attempting imitation, though achieving only a debased "bang-bang" sensationalism. After his death Henley wrote that since Dickens died, "no death that one can recall in letters has so moved the English-speaking world".<sup>11</sup> Kipling wrote valedictory verse, and Steevens was deemed worthy of a memorial edition and biographies in the standard reference works. Some modified their praise by gentle criticism: The Times, Henley, Sidney Lee and J.B. Atkins claimed that, straining for effect and writing too easily and hurriedly, he failed to achieve his full potential and that only a small fraction of his work did justice to him.<sup>12</sup>

Such eulogy may puzzle later readers, for there were others against whom he could be measured and of whom he

fell short. He had limitations partly explicable by his youth - hence possibly his dogmatism and intolerance - relative inexperience, 'culture shock' and attempting too much, too quickly, and possibly in part from the journalist career pattern. Young gentlemen from Oxford or Cambridge were not sent out to learn reporting, but set to write leaders, which encouraged pontificating without compilation of evidence.<sup>13</sup> Despite his care and effort with his writing,<sup>14</sup> he was neither a great writer nor a great journalist. He lacked sufficient research, expertise, analysis and profound insight. His work lacked historical depth and perspective. He lacked sympathy, imagination and ability to envisage future potential and development: his mind seemed blinkered by immediacy. His work was often superficial, tending to oversimplification and reductionism, and sometimes hyperbole. He denounced much but, excepting his naval writings, offered few constructive proposals. Despite reviewers' claims he never, unlike Kipling, attained to literature. He accepted too much and inquired too little. Stead claimed, "A journalist is, or ought to be, a perpetual note of interrogation".<sup>15</sup> Steevens failed to question and investigate and, unlike Russell, MacGahan or Stead, he never pioneered and revealed and so influenced opinion as to change government policy: he lacked their achievement. Bullard called him, "an almost unique combination of scholar and journalist".<sup>16</sup> Yet in abandoning an academic career - his attitude indicated by his article, 'The Futile Don' - he largely abandoned academic standards. His approach was unscholarly: after Naval Policy he did not research his subjects. In 1896, before he became a war

correspondent, he had admitted he knew nothing of military affairs yet thereafter apparently did little to remedy this. His reputation was largely from his war correspondence, but he lacked the experience, knowledge and insight which enabled Archibald Forbes to present so much fuller a picture of a war, and to relate a specific campaign to wider military issues and problems. He failed to relate his war reporting to the issues debated by the military and defence-minded - by conservatives and reformers, 'continentalists' and 'imperial' - including the effects of increased firepower, infantry tactics and capability, cavalry armament and role, mounted infantry and, much publicised in 1899, the ideas of Bloch on the future of war.<sup>17</sup> On conscription he was inconclusive. He failed to ask the right questions. He was insufficiently interested in defence and war: his ambition was elsewhere, to write his magnum opus on London "in its various and contradictory aspects".<sup>18</sup> His avoidance of the technical, though praised by contemporaries, flawed his reporting. Intelligent, able and with critical faculties unconstrained by military training and tradition, he might reasonably have been expected to be more perceptive and critical, especially on the Boer War. The best journalism was based on study, expertise and experience. Steevens apparently assumed that intelligence, flair and style sufficed. They did for the 'new journalism' - The Times obituary noted he had "a style well suited to the journalism of the newer kind" - and to evaluate Steevens is to evaluate the standards of the 'new journalism' of which he was the most praised writer and whose faults he partly shared. But they did not suffice for the journalism that from the quality of its information

and ideas was taken seriously by national decision-makers: that of, for example, Wilkinson, G.S. Clarke or Amery. According to the Spectator obituary, "he cherished serious literary ambitions and looked forward to emancipation from the tyranny of his journalistic popularity". Although at Balliol he had read some ancient history and considered becoming an historian, and although through his books he functioned as a contemporary historian, he was not an historian, and his values were a journalist's. His priority was "good copy" and this he provided. However Daily Mail "good copy" and books compiled from it without further research, were inadequate as serious journalism or as contemporary history. The Times obituary listed his books and commented: "This is a remarkable list for a man who has died at the age of thirty". He had been a young man in a hurry, rushing from assignment to assignment without time to know any in depth. The price of his impressively extensive oeuvre was superficiality, quantity at the cost of quality. His achievement was limited: his journalism and books were largely superficial impressions. Yet his reputation was disproportionate to his achievement.

He early gained success and fame, and his reputation continued to grow. Why he was so highly regarded by contemporaries is significant, indicative both of his qualities and his contemporaries' values. "The past is a foreign country": his reputation is explicable primarily in terms of the specific complex of contemporary attitudes, the spirit of the age. In part his reputation derived from his Oxonian success, then probably more valued than before or

since, and from the boosting of Henley and Harmsworth:<sup>19</sup> Harmsworth, who never attended university, was possibly over-impressed by academic achievement.<sup>20</sup> In part Steevens' reputation derived from the attractions of his personality, conversation and wit; in part, including the Harmsworth hyperbole, from his friends' shock at his unexpected early death and lost potential, their *Lycidas*.<sup>21</sup> His reputation was largely from potential rather than achievement. Abrahams wrote that, "all that can be put down on paper of the events of his life is, of course, a very inadequate measure of his great gifts...all his friends regarded such successes as comparatively slight episodes in his career".<sup>22</sup> Contemporaries valued him for his character, style and message. They praised his friendship, sweet nature, magnanimity, sincerity, courage and honour: his logical, curious mind, "never satisfied with his knowledge"; his hard work, wit and humour.<sup>23</sup>

Contemporaries praised him as a journalist and writer, and for his style. He was seen as an innovative writer, and his success was partly from novelty. Oscar Browning claimed that, "He initiated not only a new conception of journalism, but a new style of English writing, never seen either before or since", and Black and White praised his writing as, "modern to the last degree of up-to-dateness".<sup>24</sup> Contemporaries praised his writing for its vigour, vividness, pictorial and cinematographic qualities, and "power of literary impressionism".<sup>25</sup> Abrahams praised his "avoidance of whatever was pretentious, technical or irrelevant".<sup>26</sup> The Spectator praised his "seeing eye" and Spenser Wilkinson wrote that, "even the dullest of readers could hardly fail

to see what he wished them to see".<sup>27</sup> Contemporaries claimed his writing attracted both the million and the elect. Henley compared him to Dickens, Stevenson and Kipling, claiming he could "both understand and see", praised his imagination and "peculiar capacity for vision and realisation" and claimed, "he stood alone among English journalists".<sup>28</sup> It was suggested that after his wanderings he would have settled and written some great work, that he might have been "the Kinglake of the Transvaal".<sup>29</sup> Abrahams claimed that, "if he had lived, he would have been recognised as one of the leaders of thought among his contemporaries".<sup>30</sup>

Steevens' message was central to his success and reputation. He succeeded largely because of the quality of his writing and because he wrote what his readers wanted. He often responded emotionally, and his emotion was that of his readers. Abrahams noted that he wrote of, "the countries in which Englishmen are most deeply interested, and the stirring events which are changing in our generation the position of the British Empire".<sup>31</sup> Henley wrote that, "he had identified himself so keenly and so intimately with the greatness of England".<sup>32</sup> Contemporaries praised his patriotism and imperialism, his increasing of popular imperialism and educating the public to, "a pride in our country's imperial destiny".<sup>33</sup> One contemporary claimed, "What Mr. Kipling has done for fiction Mr. Steevens did for fact. He was a priest of the Imperialist idea, and the glory of the Empire was ever uppermost in his writings".<sup>34</sup> The Morning Post tribute claimed that, "It is given to some journalists to wield great influence, and few have done more



to spread the imperial idea than has been done by Mr. Steevens during the last four or five years of his brief life".<sup>35</sup> It was claimed that he could have taken a leading role in influencing the public to press for military reform.<sup>36</sup> Contemporaries largely praised his qualities and minimised his faults. His significance was that, despite his limitations relative to outstanding contemporary writers for the press, he was so praised. It was as the publicist of what so many of his contemporaries believed and wanted confirmed - for his patriotism, imperialism, ethnocentrism, bellicism, navalism, tough-mindedness, prejudices, antagonisms, pride, pessimism and optimism, hopes and fears, that he was so valued. He presented war as his contemporaries wanted to perceive it. None of his admirers wrote that his death condemned war. His historical significance was his typicality of his age, as a spokesman: he articulated a zeitgeist. His content unoriginal and largely superficial but his style novel, he brightly repackaged the conventional wisdom. Contemporaries - journalists, politicians and soldiers - believed the 'Fourth Estate' influential and able to change history, and his admirers claimed he had great influence.<sup>37</sup> The Spectator claimed his reporting was very popular and that, "no journalist, indeed no writer of recent times, had a wider or more varied circle of readers".<sup>38</sup> Recently H.J. Field has claimed that Steevens was characteristic of "homo imperiosus" and that his Daily Mail journalism was crucial in "co-opting the masses" to imperialism.<sup>39</sup> However his influence, though extensive and considerable, can only be conjectured. The Daily Mail was the largest-circulation daily, read by middle class, artisans and politicians though, as Garvin

told Harmsworth, the political élite was influenced by The Times not the Mail. Steevens' articles in the serious reviews were read by the élite, and his books were reviewed by papers read by them, including The Times and the Spectator and read by some of them. His influence was further spread, and lingered on, through cheap editions, school readers and history handbooks for elementary teachers.<sup>40</sup> Probably his writings reached an extensive largely middle-class, already-imperialist readership, and confirmed rather than converted.<sup>41</sup>

#### 10. CONCLUSION: NOTES

1. Spectator (23 Jun 1900) 877.
2. On social darwinism see Benjamin Kidd, Social Evolution (1894); Langer 85-90; Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform (1960) 28-52; James Joll, '1914: The Unspoken Assumptions' and H.W. Koch, 'Social Darwinism as a Factor in the New Imperialism' in (ed) H.W. Koch, The Origins of the First World War (1972); Kennedy, Antagonism 308-11. See also Salisbury's and Chamberlain's speeches.
3. My conclusions on Steevens' message and especially his social darwinism are interpretation and in part conjecture, based partly on what I see as implicit in his writing.
4. Internal evidence suggests indirect acquaintance with Clausewitz's ideas: Steevens knew Dilke and read and cited Wilkinson.
5. Dilke quo Pound & Harmsworth 208; S. Wilkinson in Morning Post (22 Jan 1900); Spectator (27 Jan 1900) 126; An.Register 1900 II 101; Henley ix; H.W. Wilson, With the Flag to Pretoria II (1901) 521; Prior 300; Bullard 304-19; Villiers, Villiers II 173; Pemberton 67.
6. Blackburn 179, Mathews 224.
7. Edward S. May, Changes and Chances of a Soldier's Life (1925) 218.

8. Quo Pemberton 68. On his response to Steevens' death ib 67; Pound & Harmsworth 253-4.
9. Spectator (15 Oct '98) 525.
10. Churchill, Early Life 219; Mencken quo Byron Farwell, The Great Boer War (1977) 220.
11. Henley xxv.
12. Obituary, Times 22 Jan 1900, 7; Henley xxvi; Atkins, Russell II 376.
13. Pemberton 68; John St. Loe Strachey, The Adventure of Living (1922) 164.
14. Pemberton 69.
15. W.T. Stead, 'Government by Journalism', Contemp.R. (May '86) 653-74.
16. Bullard 304-5.
17. I.S. Bloch, Is War Now Impossible? (1899). Bloch published his conclusions on the Boer War, including in 'Some Lessons of the Transvaal War', Contemp.R. (April 1900) 457-71. See also T.H.E. Travers, 'Technology, Tactics and Morale: Jean de Bloch, the Boer War, and British Military Theory, 1900-1914', J.Mod.Hist. 51 (1979); Bailes Thesis.
- 18,19. Christina Steevens, 'Preface' to Glimpses.
20. H.G. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography (1934, '69) I 331.
21. 'Editorial' C.L.S. Mag. (March 1900) 2.
22. Abrahams 15, 16.
23. Blackburn 148-50; Abrahams 20; Bullard 319. On honour see Best, Honour.
24. Quo India ; cf obit. ILN CXVI (27 Jan 1900) 113.
25. Bullard 312; Blackburn 159, 172; v also Times obit. Best has noted the late 19th century desire to be thought 'realistic', Best, Honour 48.
26. Abrahams 19; cf Spectator (23 June 1900) 877.

27. Spectator (15 Oct'98) 526; ib (17 Jan 1900) 126; M. Post  
(22 Jan 1900), Field 189.
28. Henley xx-xxi.
29. Blackburn 167,157.
30. Abrahams 21.
31. Ib 15.
32. Henley xxv.
33. Quo Blackburn 166.
34. Quo ib 176.
35. Quo ib 174.
36. Ib 167.
37. Blackburn 166-7, 174.
38. Spectator (27 Jan 1900) 126.
39. Field 235, 120-94. Cf (ed) John MacKenzie, Imperialism  
and Popular Culture (1986) 94-5.
40. B.M. Catalogue; J.M. MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire  
(1984) 181,190,213.
41. Cf Kennedy, Antagonism 363; Koss 215.

## CHAPTER VI     FICTION OF FUTURE WARS

### 1.     THEMES

Another medium of input of images and concepts of war and defence was the genre of tales of imaginary future war which has been studied by I.F. Clarke and, relative to the invasion issue, by Howard Moon.<sup>1</sup> In 1871 Colonel George Chesney's The Battle of Dorking told of German invasion ending British power, prosperity and empire.<sup>2</sup> It emphasised themes that were to recur in later tales: the warning of British vulnerability and unpreparedness and of foreign threat, the denunciation of existing society, the contempt for politics and politicians especially Radical and, above all, the "if only" theme that disaster was preventable if only the necessary changes were made in time. Internationally famous and much imitated, it began the genre of purposive fiction of imaginary future wars, a favourite propaganda device that flourished in Britain and on the Continent until the Great War, attempting to warn, persuade and entertain.

The tales differed in purpose and emphasis. Some were primarily propaganda for defence change. Some were by hacks like William Le Queux, exploiting the genre's popularity and profitability. Some were especially concerned with the nature of war: strategy, tactics, matériel and combat experience. This type was pioneered by H.O. Arnold-Forster's In a Conning Tower (1888) which described a duel between a British and a French ironclad culminating in the British ramming and sinking the French. Its success

was followed in Britain by a new school of fiction of future naval wars - expressing and reinforcing current naval anxiety and navalism - which included G.S. Clarke's The Last Great Naval War (1891) and Admiral Colomb's The Great War of 189- (1892). Another example was William Laird Clowes' The Captain of the "Mary Rose" (1892). Clowes, a journalist, naval historian and leading navalist publicist who initiated the 1893 naval scare, wrote his tale to show the probable "sea-fighting of tomorrow"<sup>3</sup> and spread his navalist message: warning of naval unpreparedness, demanding Admiralty reorganization and asserting, contrary to his later views, the necessity of holding the Mediterranean. While it was intended primarily for adults, he wrote that he hoped British boys would read it and grow up interested in naval matters so that future public would not be navally ignorant and apathetic.<sup>4</sup> The future-war genre overlapped and merged with others. Some future war tales were written for boys, for example those by Dr Gordon Stables, the best-selling boys' adventure-writer and B.O.P. contributor: The cruise of the "Vengeful": A Story of the Royal Navy (1902) and The Meteor Flag of England (1905) both telling of surprise invasions and, despite Stables' naval background, urging adequate land defences, their message contrary to the navalists' and resembling that of the 1859 commission and the army invasionists.<sup>5</sup> The Cruise of the "Vengeful" was probably partly derived from Le Queux's The Great War in England in 1897 (1894): an example of derivation within the genre.<sup>6</sup> Other tales had an immediate purpose, for example Harmsworth's electioneering 'Siege of Portsmouth' (1895)<sup>7</sup>. The tales expressed current fears and enmities.<sup>8</sup> During the Anglo-French

hostility from 1882 to 1903 France, sometimes with Russia, was the fictional enemy. Later, with the Anglo-German antagonism, from Erskine Childers' The Riddle of the Sands (1903) the enemy was usually Germany. Advocates of compulsory military training used fiction as propaganda. Probably the best-known such tale was Le Queux's Harmsworth-promoted, Roberts-advised sensational The Invasion of 1910 (1906), thick with cliché and atrocity, warning of Britain's unpreparedness and the necessity of heeding Roberts, before too late.<sup>9</sup> The tales repeatedly denounced British faults and decadence.

The future-war tales expressed and reinforced current attitudes to war, especially war as acceptable, exciting and romantic. They usually minimised the horrors of battle and were not explicit on wounds, mutilation and suffering. Some later tales emphasised, still inexplicitly and without detail, foreign and mob atrocities. Most assumed future wars would resemble past wars, and portrayed short wars of movement and rapid decisive battles, of cavalry charges and close-order bayonet attacks, and of decisive fleet actions as at Trafalgar.<sup>10</sup> Their assumptions were often obsolete in terms of weaponry, and they failed to realise the implications of increased firepower, the possibility of prolonged trench warfare and the possible scale and duration of war. They failed to see the effects on industry and the need for a massive munitions industry in a major war: munitions were hardly if ever mentioned. They portrayed war as disrupting the economy, causing unemployment and distress, not as transforming the economy. I.F. Clarke has claimed that

while the military experts failed to foresee the nature of future war, imaginative civilian writers - Bloch, Robida, Wells and Conan Doyle - came nearest to the truth.<sup>11</sup> However most civilian writers of future-war fiction were no more prescient than the military, whose assumptions they shared. Among the recurring themes were the 'bolt from the blue', the 'fifth column' of resident foreigners, food shortage and starvation with government laissez-faire inactivity, popular discontent and riots,<sup>12</sup> and their exploitation by socialists, anarchists, criminals, aliens and enemy agents. Another recurring theme was the enemy agent and spy: cunning, ruthless and evil. Le Queux, who claimed he was a spy, counterspy and espionage expert, wrote repeatedly of spies and their threat to Britain.<sup>13</sup> In his melodramatic The Great War in England in 1897 (1894) - written for Harmsworth and recommended by Roberts and F.N. Maude - a French agent employed as a clerk at the Admiralty killed the officer responsible for sending mobilisation telegrams to naval units, and sent telegrams ordering them away: "England was left unprotected".<sup>14</sup> In England's Peril (1899), the villainous head of the French secret service attempted by blackmail to obtain Britain's anti-invasion plans. Le Queux claimed, "The secret intelligence departments of the three great Powers are marvellously well organised and possess some of the most adroit thieves and irrepressible adventurers...utterly unscrupulous...It is known in the diplomatic circle that England swarms with spies".<sup>15</sup> Later Le Queux wrote, again for Harmsworth, The Invasion of 1910 (1906) in which Germans resident in England, spies and saboteurs, prepared for the invasion. In 1909 he published his



influential Spies of the Kaiser which he claimed was "based upon the serious facts within my own personal knowledge...I have before me a file of amazing documents".<sup>16</sup>

The future-war tales varied in their messages. Some were vehicles for specific demands for reform and of strategic and tactical doctrines, part of wider pressure-group campaigns. Occasionally they criticised Admiralty faults, as did W.L. Clowes' and C.N. Robinson's The Great Naval War of 1887 (1887). Written by navalists, it supported Beresford's campaign for Admiralty reform and especially an effective planning department. In 1887 Beresford 'leaked' his memorandum on the lack of war-planning to the Pall Mall Gazette. Clowes and Robinson took this as their text, printing part of it on their title page. Their tale showed the disastrous results of lack of naval planning and preparation. The French, well-prepared, began the war with surprise attacks. In England, "The machinery of the

Admiralty and War Office collapsed under the strain...and incredible confusion resulted".<sup>17</sup> Neither the fleet nor coast defences were ready and after only two weeks' war Britain was "at the mercy of the enemy".<sup>18</sup> The tale ended with the statement that this was the preventable result of years of negligence and mismanagement. Expressing widely-held belief, tales more often criticised the War Office than the Admiralty. One example was G.S. Clarke's pseudonymous The Last Great Naval War (1891). Clarke was a navalist and advocate of War Officer reform. He expressed his Blue Water views on the efficacy of naval defence against invasion, criticising Chesney's and other tales which had denied it:

"ingenious and vivid fictions...in which the British navy was spirited away in the opening pages, and successful invasion, with the occupation of London, quickly followed in logical sequence".<sup>19</sup> He condemned the War Office as over-centralised, inefficient, confused, overwhelmed by its own paperwork, unprepared for war, bungling and causing unnecessary losses: "Want of preparation for some of the most probable contingencies of war, combined with a centralised administration...a byword of inefficiency, proved a heavy handicap to the British army"(p101).

Another recurring theme was imperialism: the possible loss of the Empire, the necessity of imperial defence, and the possible colonial and Indian contribution to defence; shown, for example, in Clarke's Naval War and Le Queux's invasion tales. In Clarke's tale colonial forces attacked French colonies, and in Le Queux's Great War Bengal lancers and Gurkhas fought French invaders in London. Some tales, notably those of Clarke and Colomb, were written from Blue Water assumptions. Most, from Chesney's Battle of Dorking on, were based on the invasionist assumption that naval defence alone could not be relied upon: on the assumption of the possible absence of the fleet, destroyed by some secret weapon - as with Chesney's "fatal engines which sent our ships one after the other, to the bottom"<sup>20</sup> - or "decoyed" away as in Le Queux's Great War,<sup>21</sup> or because the fleet was distant enough for sufficient time, as in F.N. Maude's The New Battle of Dorking (1900) when the squadrons were in the Mediterranean and on manoeuvres off Ireland, so the French could rush across the Channel. Le Queux's Invasion of 1910,

written during the controversy between Blue Water navalists and compulsionist invasionists, denounced, "the sleek, soft-spoken, self-confident Blue Water School"(24).

## 2. EXAMPLES

The diversity of the input on war and defence was further exemplified in the Earl of Mayo's The War Cruise of the 'Aries' (1894). Mayo was a leading Anglo-Irish landowner with no special knowledge of naval warfare, and his tale was about the ram as a weapon. Warships then had ram bows and some vessels, called 'rams', were designed largely for ramming, for example the Polyphemus of 1881.<sup>22</sup> She had a more distinguished fictional than actual career, fighting the French in three fictional wars.<sup>23</sup> However in the 'eighties and 'nineties expert opinion was tending against ramming. Mayo's tale was apparently inspired by the 1893 sinking of the Victoria which he claimed showed that, "in any future war at sea the ram would play a most important part".<sup>24</sup> The tale was of a near-future Anglo-French war. A private syndicate, on the initiative of an Irish landowner, built the ram Aries, "simply a battering-ram with a ship built round it"(13), which successfully fought the French until finally defeated by a superior force. Mayo's tale was poorly-written and implausible: for example, the wartime availability of shipyard capacity for such a private venture. Though by a respected public figure, it probably had little influence. It is an example of a work by a person ignorant of his subject, disseminating data that was obsolete and inaccurate. The leading defence publicists operated within

a context not only of innovation and analysis, but also of continued dissemination to the public of the outmoded and irrational.

A significant example of propagandist future war fiction was H.W. Wilson's and Arnold White's When War Breaks Out (1898). Wilson was an Oxford graduate and leading naval journalist - on The Times then the Daily Mail - navalist publicist and naval historian: his Ironclads in Action (1896), with an introduction by Mahan, was a standard work. He was a founder member of the Navy League and edited its Journal from 1895 to 1908 when he joined the Imperial Maritime League. White was a sensationalist popular journalist, 'Vanoc' of the Referee, social-imperialist and 'Efficiency' advocate, Navy Leaguer and friend of Fisher.<sup>25</sup> His books included the social-imperialist jeremiad Efficiency and Empire (1901) and his propaganda for children, The Navy: Its place in British History (1912) epitomising navalist doctrine and claiming, "Upon the strength, discipline, spirit and efficiency of the Navy, the future of every boy and girl in the Empire depends" (206).

When War Breaks Out told of a Franco-Russian attack on England in 1900. In London, East End aliens, anarchists and socialists rioted: "The foulest scum of Europe exists in London...the anarchist dregs of every country...The crowd was largely composed of foreigners whose sinister faces showed that they believed their opportunity had come...six policemen had been killed, two of them mutilated in true continental style" (31, 41). There was sufficient food in

the country but "cosmopolitan speculators...wallowing in boundless wealth and luxury"(45) caused immense price increases which, with unemployment, working-class hunger and even starvation, provoked riots and demands for ending the war. There were insufficient battleships and "an appalling deficiency of cruisers"(52) for commerce protection, resulting in ruinous shipping losses: "How plainly England now sees that with such a mercantile fleet as hers, supremacy at sea is absolutely essential"(ib). Finally there was a decisive British naval victory, off Beachy Head. The tale, like others of the genre, was poorly-written, cliché'd, sometimes inaccurate, and expressed its authors' views on defence controversies. It was written from Blue Water assumptions and demanded a stronger navy. It warned against foreign spies. It assumed war would be short, with a decisive naval battle. It warned that food supply would be crucial in war: an issue then emphasised by some of the defence-minded demanding state granaries.<sup>26</sup> It condemned the proposal - advocated by Tryon, G.S. Clarke and others - for wartime state shipping insurance - as impracticable, "a prey to every fraudulent shipowner"(53), and claimed, "the only feasible system of National Insurance is...a strong and adequate navy"(ib). It asserted the difficulty of blockade with the strain and exhaustion of personnel and problems of coal. Its authors, familiar with the latest naval thinking, differed from Mayo on ramming. It expressed also an assumption common in its genre: that in a major war against European powers the government, instead of assuming special powers and controlling the domestic situation, would be a passive bystander in economic and social problems, continuing

laissez-faire inaction despite popular misery and unrest.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, as in Clarke's Naval War, it assumed that instead of directing public opinion the government would be much influenced by it and might even be forced to make peace. At the end of the book the authors stated its lessons: no concession to foreign encroachments - a repeated imperialist demand expressed, for example, by Spenser Wilkinson<sup>28</sup> - a home-grown food supply and a sufficiently strong navy: "Eighty-five years of peace had tempted England to forget the realities of national existence: one hundred days' war have taught her anew the lesson of sea-power - a lesson which will not be forgotten by this generation" (94). The tale was characteristic both in expressing concepts typical of its genre, and expressing its authors' particular antipathies, notably White's hostility to alien immigration.<sup>29</sup>

Other tales also warned of the disastrous effects of wartime food shortage.<sup>30</sup> In Charles Gleig's When All Men Starve (1898) there were food shortages, bread riots, attacks on horses for meat, policemen massacred, and socialist revolution. In Allen Clarke's Starved into Surrender (1904) food shortage led to rioting, looting, anarchy, atrocities, cannibalism, and finally to a socialist Utopia.

Another example of future-war fiction as propaganda was Colonel F.N. Maude's The New Battle of Dorking (1900). Maude was a leading and extreme Prussian-influenced continentalist publicist, without combat experience, who asserted the mass offensive and morale and denounced Bloch's doctrines especially on firepower, the "impassable zone of fire" and

the supremacy of the defensive.<sup>31</sup> In 1900 with the Boer War reverses, almost the entire regular army overseas - the Royal Tournament had to be performed by the Navy and Volunteers - and continental, especially French, hostility, there was another invasion scare.<sup>32</sup> The invasion scare provoked more future-war tales, including Maude's New Battle of Dorking, a vehicle for his views on the French invasion threat, Bloch, firepower and tactics. He claimed the British fleet could not prevent a surprise French invasion: "Our fleet, even if double the present strength, could not get up steam in time to prevent a landing" (xiv). The tale was set in August 1900 and told of a French invasion, in the absence of the British fleet. The invaders almost succeeded, but were defeated. Maude's tale had many recurring features of its genre: patriotism, imperialism, undeclared war, government laissez-faire on food and employment, 'disloyalists', riots, denunciation of politicians, and citing with approval the warnings of like-minded persons, here of Stead. It also stated Maude's doctrine on weapons and tactics. He condemned "the fallacies of the Bloch school" (61) and asserted the effectiveness of infantry close-order frontal bayonet assault and of cavalry charges. He claimed the British should not have abandoned dum-dum bullets,<sup>33</sup> and condemned the "tactical monstrosities evolved in South Africa" (242) and especially open order. Close order increased firepower, as could be proven mathematically, and so would defeat extended order. An individual had no greater chance of death in close than extended order, and a lance wound was more lethal than that of a modern bullet.<sup>34</sup> Maude's tale was controversial. It was significant as an

"illuminating extreme" and as a continentalist contribution to tactical debate and to the public's images of war and defence.

Implicitly answering Maude was another book by an army officer using the genre to contribute to military debate and as propaganda for tactical doctrine, Captain W.E. Cairnes' The Coming Waterloo (1901). Cairnes was a middle-aged infantry officer without combat experience who, while his regiment served in the Boer War, was adjutant to a Yorkshire Volunteer battalion.<sup>35</sup> He was also a contributor to the Liberal Westminster Gazette. He was an 'imperial', anti-continentalist army reformer who believed it was necessary to educate public opinion on the army's needs.<sup>36</sup> He had written, on the Boer War, An Absent-Minded War (1900) which Edward Spiers has called, "possibly the most famous critique of the state of the army and the conduct of the war by the War Office".<sup>37</sup> In it he denounced the army's faults as revealed in the war and demanded reform, including of musketry, field training and tactics: the army should, "abandon that blind adherence to German methods which experience shows is quite unfitted to our needs"(145). He repeated his demand for reform in The Army From Within (1901), again emphasising musketry, field training and the importance of the Boer War as the test of the army. In The Coming Waterloo he reinforced the message of his earlier writings. Set in 1903, it described an Anglo-French war in which the British invaded France and defeated the French. He portrayed the army as having learned the lessons of the Boer War and reformed accordingly. He asserted the dominance of infantry



firepower, especially of rifle-fire, and the futility of charges against it: "it's suicide to advance within five hundred yards of decent infantry so long as they've got their wits about them"(322). He concluded by asserting the superiority of the British professional élite army over mass European conscripts: "The highly-trained few will annihilate the half-trained multitude in the fighting of the future"(364). The debate continued.<sup>38</sup>

### 3. CONCLUSION

Defence was controversial and from The Battle of Dorking, denounced by Gladstone, future-war fiction continued controversial. Some condemned it as alarmist, scare-mongering and increasing international hostility: such critics were in turn criticised in the fiction.<sup>39</sup> Some criticised, mocked and parodied its more extreme and implausible manifestations, or specific doctrines. In 1903 the Spectator criticised "the wildly improbable tales" and in 1906 it attacked "sensational fancies" conveying conscriptionist propaganda.<sup>40</sup> In 1910 Charles Lowe, in the Liberal Contemporary Review, denounced the invasion and spy fiction, especially Le Queux's, as, "pernicious works...a poisoning of the wells of public truth...a public crime".<sup>41</sup> Criticism was a response to the genre's importance. Through the genre, as Howard Moon had written, "the defence-minded could appeal directly to the masses",<sup>42</sup> as well as to other defence-minded and to the national decision-makers. Future-war tales were published in leading journals and the better tales were favourably reviewed in the national and service

press: for example The Times praised Arnold-Forster's In a Conning Tower and Clowes' The Captain of the "Mary Rose".<sup>43</sup> Contemporaries believed the genre important and influential, though in some cases they saw its faults but apparently believed it necessary for convincing the public. Roberts collaborated with Le Queux - though not as Le Queux claimed in his memoirs<sup>44</sup> - and wrote recommendations for his future-war fiction. Yet he wrote to Le Queux in 1894 tactfully criticising the implausibility of his Great War: "I hardly like to criticise a work which to be effective must to a great extent be imaginative...under the conditions specified by you, I should be inclined to regard your forecast of the result of the supposed conflict as being unduly favourable".<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless senior officers praised such tales: Roberts wrote prefaces and Wolseley and the Duke of Connaught commended particular tales.<sup>46</sup> Officers, defence experts and defence publicists wrote tales and discussed seriously those by others: Butler, Chesney, Clowes, Arnold-Forster, Clarke, Admiral Colomb, Eardley-Wilmot, Fred. T. Jane, Archibald Forbes, H.W. Wilson and Maude wrote tales. Dilke, interviewed in Black and White on their serialised Great War of 189- considered it at length, praising it and its "brilliant staff of experts" though disagreeing with parts.<sup>47</sup> He claimed that it was improbable war would begin in the Balkans or that in a Franco-German war British troops would go to Belgium, and that the tale could mislead the public into believing the existing military preparation was adequate.<sup>48</sup> In 1894 Maude gave Le Queux's Great War a full-length review in the J.R.U.S.I. and claimed, "In our opinion based on twenty years' close study of the problems, the sequence of events is probable, and the data essentially correct".<sup>49</sup>

Moreover there was a tendency for fiction and fact to merge. Foreign fiction of attacks on Britain was frequently cited as evidence of foreign intentions. One example was H.W. Wilson's 1896 Navy League pamphlet Our Next Great War warning that the Navy was too weak for war against France, and citing French naval officers' writings. He described 'Our Fate' if defeated, citing Plus d'Angleterre: the French would have no mercy and Britain would lose her navy, much of the Empire, the British Museum's Egyptian antiquities and Elgin marbles, and pay an immense indemnity.<sup>50</sup> He did not state that Plus d'Angleterre was fiction. The merging of fact and fiction was likely in a genre which sought to show what could, from the actual present, occur in the near future. Some tales used for verisimilitude actual places, buildings, warships and persons. For example in W.L. Clowes' and C.N. Robinson's The Great Naval War of 1887 (1887) the royal family travelled round, "disbursing large sums out of their private means for the good of the country"(p19). In Clarke's Naval War the British fleet under Hornby, Tryon and the Duke of Edinburgh defeated the French fleet, and Ben Tillett led a labour peace delegation to France.<sup>51</sup> In Colomb's Great War Evelyn Wood occupied Antwerp, Labouchere and Lawson opposed the war, Kitchener defeated a French-instigated Mahdist invasion of Egypt, Hornby defeated the French fleet in the Mediterranean and Wolseley the Russian army in Bulgaria. In Le Queux's Great War the National Gallery was burned by anarchists singing the 'Marseillaise', Bradford town hall was blown up by anarchists, and Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey and the Natural History Museum were shelled by the invaders. In Gleig's When All Men Starve hungry London

mobs massacred policemen on Wimbledon Common and looted Hampstead, Kew and Richmond. In Le Queux's Invasion of 1910 London was bombarded and the Houses of Parliament wrecked, and Germans advancing through Brentford were fired on by 4-7s on Richmond Hill and riflemen in Kew Gardens. Sometimes characters were hardly-disguised actual persons: for example in the Naval War of 1887 Thornleigh (Hornby), Gaymantle (Fremantle) and Lord Charles Applesford (Beresford); in Plus Encore d'Angleterre Lords Salsborough, Hurtington and R. Church. Allen Clarke's Starved into Surrender, exceptional in its socialistic message, criticised Mr Fiskal Orkid and "Mr Bloodyard Dripping, the music-hall minstrel of Empire"(128). Sometimes there were references to warnings by actual persons: for example in Maude's New Battle of Dorking to Stead's warnings, and in Le Queux's Invasion of 1910 to Roberts'. Moreover in some of Le Queux's works including his memoirs, fiction was presented as fact: notably in Spies of the Kaiser (1909) which as David French has shown, led to reports from the public of alleged spies presenting, "almost an exact mirror image of his book" and leading to official counter-espionage measures.<sup>52</sup> However espionage is most susceptible to confusion of fact and fabrication, and so an extreme case. Probably few persons were deceived by future-war fiction at the level of the man who after reading H.G. Well's The War of the Worlds asked at the Natural History Museum to see the Martian,<sup>53</sup> or of the later listeners to Orson Welles' Martian invasion broadcast. Yet in the context of defence anxieties and foreign threats, probably for many fact and fiction were inextricably mixed and fiction an important influence on attitudes, including "unspoken

assumptions", to war and defence. Though its influence cannot be quantified it was popular, sold well and was much reprinted and both contemporaries and later historians have agreed it was influential.<sup>54</sup> Charles Lowe believed that, "such sensational writers are readily believed by the masses who contribute to the formation of public opinion, which in turn tends to influence our rulers and our relations with other countries".<sup>55</sup>

## VI. FICTION OF FUTURE WARS: NOTES

1. I.F. Clarke, Voices Propheying War 1763-1984 (1966,70); 'Forecasts of Warfare in Fiction 1803-1914', Comparative Studies in Society and History X (1967); The Pattern of Expectation 1664-2001 (1979); Moon thesis. On navalist fiction see also Hamilton thesis. For a different view of the genre see (ed) Michael Moorcock, Before Armageddon (1975)3-18. Clarke, Voices is the definitive work and starting point for further study. My chapter complements these works, relating the genre to defence controversies and images of war, and is based on a study of 65 works of fiction (23 by Le Queux, not counting his memoirs), most in the University Library, Cambridge.
2. Anon. (G.T. Chesney) 'The Battle of Dorking', Blackwood's (May'71), rp in (ed) Moorcock. See Clarke, Voices 30-58; Moon 12-13. John Gooch has suggested that its importance has probably been exaggerated, John Gooch, The Prospect of War (1981)5. Chesney, a Mutiny veteran, was one of the few future-war writers with battle experience.
3. W. Laird Clowes, The Captain of the "Mary Rose" (1892) xiii. On the '93 scare, Marder, Anatomy 180-1. On the role of coast defences see J.T. Dreyer, 'The Bombardment of Saltport', Navy & Army Illustrated IX (1900)426-7,449-52.
4. Clowes xiv.
5. On The Meteor Flag see Moon 10-11. On Stables see Philip Warner, The Best of British Pluck (1976)5,37-9; Patrick A. Dunae, 'Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914', VS (1980)110-11,118. On invasionists Moon passim.

6. Gordon Stables, The Cruise of the "Vengeful" (1902) 110-2, 153-9.
7. Pound & Harmsworth 181-2.
8. Some warned against socialist and communist threat e.g. Bracebridge Hemyng, The Commune in London (1871) transposing the pattern of the Franco-Prussian War and Commune to Britain. See also 'Grip', The Monster Municipality (1882) in which a radical London Council, corrupt and wasteful, clashed with the central government and was finally abolished. Later examples were William Le Queux, The Unknown Tomorrow (1910) on socialist revolution, and Dennis Wheatley, Black August (1938) on communist revolution.
9. On Roberts' warnings, William Le Queux, The Invasion of 1910 (1906) v,vi,24,165-6,333. See W. Le Queux, Things I Know (1923) 244-50, unreliable; Clarke, Voices 144-8.
10. e.g. W. Laird Clowes & Alan H. Burgoyne, Trafalgar Refought (1905).
11. Clarke, Voices 90; 'Forecasts' 20; cf Pattern 106,186. On Wells see R.T. Stearn, 'Wells and War', Wellsian IV NS (1983). Exceptional tales by a serving officer were in Ole Luk-Oie (E.D. Swinton), The Green Curve (1909).
12. There had been food riots during the Napoleonic wars. On fear of urban mobs see Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London (1971) chapter 16.
13. William Le Queux (1864-1927): journalist, prolific thriller-writer, charlatan, self-publicising man of mystery and "professional alarmist". See his memoirs, Things I Know (1923) and, largely cribbed from it, N. St. Barbe Sladen, The Real Le Queux (1938), both unreliable; also A.J.A. Morris, The Scaremongers (1984) 107-8,156-7,412. There is no scholarly biography of him. His thrillers were characterised by snobbery and bizarre ingenuity of murder-methods including an explosive cigar in England's Peril (1899), a cobra in bed in The Mystery of a Motor Car (1906), explosive bon-bons in Spies of the Kaiser (1909), a poison cigar in Revelations of the Secret Service (1911) and Hushed Up! (1911), and various poisons and bacilli, including tetanus in soap and rabies in ointment, in The Death-Doctor (1912) his most 'sick' work. He claimed to reveal the identity of 'Jack the Ripper' from Rasputin's papers, Things 271. His greatest popularity and influence were before and during the Great War, when he wrote anti-German fiction presented as fact e.g. Hushed Up at German Headquarters (1917) alleging the Crown Prince was an opium-taking roué, and Love Intrigues of the Kaiser's Sons (1918) alleging they were murderers and blackmailers. He also wrote the

partly-factual German Atrocities (1914). After the war there was a reaction against him, especially among the young, Sladen 225. Another thriller-writer who wrote future-war fiction was Edgar Wallace: Private Selby (1912) and "1925": The story of a fatal peace (1915), the latter arguably one of the most prescient of the genre, with German treaty-violation and aggression.

14. W. Le Queux, The Great War in England in 1897 (1894)55. First published as 'The Poisoned Bullet' in Harmsworth's Answers, Pound & Harmsworth 151-2.
15. W. Le Queux, England's Peril (1899)142. Xenophobia recurred through the genre.
16. W. Le Queux, Spies of the Kaiser: plotting the downfall of England (1909)x,xi; see Things I Know 235-9. He continued to warn against German spies in fiction presented as fact: Revelations of the Secret Service (1911); The German Spy (1914); German Spies in England: An Exposure (1915), and in public lectures during the Great War. German Spies in England was published in paperback as "astonishing facts", recommended by peers, dignitaries, Conan Doyle, the Daily Mail, Pall Mall Gazette, Scotsman and provincial papers. On Le Queux and spies see also Charles Lowe, 'About German Spies', Contemp. R. (Jan 1910)42-56; David French, 'Spy Fever in Britain, 1900-1915', HJ (1978)355-70.
17. Anon (W.L. Clowes & C.N. Robinson), The Great Naval War of 1887 (1887)5. Misattributed by Clarke, Voices to Clowes and Burgoyne; correct attribution in W. Laird Clowes, The Captain of the "Mary Rose" (1893)xiv.
18. Clowes & Robinson 58.
19. A. Nelson Seaforth (G.S. Clarke), The Last Great Naval War (1891)24. Clowes attributed it to Admiral Colomb, "Mary Rose"xiv. See also G.S. Clarke, Working Life 107-11. Clarke served under Chesney at the Indian Engineering College, Coopers Hill, and Chesney recommended Clarke's book to Roberts, Roberts to Chesney, 30 Sept '91, 7101-23-100-214, Roberts Papers, N.A.M.
20. Chesney, Dorking 29.
21. Other fictional examples of the fleet "decoyed" included in An Old Soldier (W.F. Butler), The Invasion of England (1882); (Captain) Henry Curties, When England Slept (1909); Edgar Wallace, Private Selby (1912); "1925"(1915).
22. On Polyphenus see ILN (25 June '81)624,9; E.H.H. Archibald, The Metal Fighting Ship in the Royal Navy 1860-1970

(1971)36-8. On ramming see W.L. Clowes, 'The Ram, in Action and in Accident, JRUSI xxviii (March '94); F.C.D. Sturdes, 'The best tactics best adapted for developing the existing power of ships and weapons', ib (April '94); Marder, Anatomy 497-8; Ruddock F. Mackay, Fisher of Kilverstone (1973)69,87-90,154. Cf H.O. Arnold-Forster, In a Conning Tower (1888) i-viii,46-54. See also David Lyon, Steam, Steel and Torpedoes: The Warship in the 19th Century (1980) 45-6,49-50.

23. Clowes & Robinson; P. Colomb et al, The Great War of 189- (1893); Earl of Mayo, The War Cruise of the 'Aries' (1894); also H.G. Wells, The War of the Worlds (1898), see Stearn 14.
24. Mayo 11. On the Victoria sinking see Richard Hough, Admirals in Collision (1959).
25. On White, Who Was Who 1916-1928; Mackay 242; Hamilton thesis 198-213. See also G.R. Searle, The Quest For National Efficiency (1971). The Referee was a Sunday paper, started 1877, "with a strong sporting and theatrical interest".
26. On the food issue see Chapter IV 2.
27. On actual planning for wartime see David French, British Economic and Strategic Planning 1905-1915 (1982); Bond, War and Society 83-4,91-2.
28. Spenser Wilkinson, The Great Alternative (1894)13-5,119-265,308-12; The Brain of the Navy (1895)8,116-20; The Nation's Awakening (1896)111-19; War and Policy (1900) 188-92,327-8; Charles W. Dilke & Spenser Wilkinson, Imperial Defence (1897)25-7. See also C.W. Dilke, 'The Conservative Foreign Policy', Fortnightly R. (Jan'91) and Walter Frewen Lord, The Lost Possessions of England (1896).
29. e.g. Arnold White, Efficiency and Empire (1901)78-80.
30. Other examples of tales with food shortages included Anon, "Down with England!" (1888), Maude, New Battle of Dorking and, best-known, Arthur Conan Doyle, 'Danger!' Strand Mag. (July 1914). Cf G.S. Clarke's Last Great Naval War in which convoys and insurance ensured adequate imports.
31. On Maude see Bailes thesis 15-18; Travers, 'Technology' 270-3,282-4. Maude had contributed to Colomb's Great War.
32. Annual Register 1900; Marder, Anatomy 373-8; Moon thesis 129-83. Maude warned against French invasion with 'Our Coming Peril', St. James's Gazette (20 Mar 1900): his fiction repeated this message.



33. On dum-dum bullets see Edward M. Spiers, 'The Use of the Dum Dum Bullet in Colonial Warfare', JICH IV (1915).
34. Anon (F.N. Maude), The New Battle of Dorking (1900)249.
35. On Cairnes see Army List (1901); Who Was Who 1897-1915; Spiers, Army 239,42.
36. Anon (W.E. Cairnes), The Army From Within (1901)vii.
37. Spiers, Army 306.
38. Travers, 'Technology'; Spiers, Army 246-7,281-2; Bond, War and Society 84-5.
39. Charles Lowe, 'About German Spies', Contemp.R. (Jan 1910) 42-56; Clarke, Voices 39,158; Moon 318-9; Colomb, Great War 138.
40. Quo Moon 310,318.
41. Lowe 42,56. Lowe was a journalist, Times Berlin correspondent 1878-91, and had contributed to Colomb's Great War.
42. Moon 13.
43. See also the favourable reviews of Arnold-Forster's Conning Tower and Clarke's Naval War in JRUSI xxxv (1891)950,1147.
44. Although the Le Queux-Roberts correspondence in the Roberts Papers has been 'weeded', that surviving shows the falsity of Le Queux's claims in Things 236-47 and that he was only a distant acquaintance and occasional collaborator: Roberts to Le Queux 17 Nov '94,7101-23-104-58; 22 Aug 1905,7101-23-122-89; Le Queux to Roberts 27 Jan'06,7101-23-47-84; 27 Oct'12,7101-23-47-89. Roberts Papers, N.A.M.
45. Roberts to Le Queux, 17 Nov'94,7101-23-104-58, Roberts Papers.
46. Roberts' letters of recommendation in Le Queux, Great War; Invasion of 1910; Clarke, Voices 66; Moon 113. For Roberts' praise of Saki (H.H. Munro), When William Came (1913) see A.J. Langguth,Saki (1982)235.
47. Colomb, Great War 305.

48. Dilke was then advocating defence reforms. Possible British intervention in Belgium was controversial, Dilke arguing against it. See C.W. Dilke, 'The Present Position of European Politics', Fortnightly R. (Jan'87)24-9(June'87)788,810-14; The British Army (1888); J.F. Maurice, The Balance of Military Power in Europe (1888)110-20,187; Christopher Howard, Splendid Isolation (1967)45,63-8; Britain and the Casus Belli 1822-1902 (1974)95-8,156-61.
49. JRUSI (1894)1022 quo Moon 114.
50. H.W. Wilson, 'Our Next Great War' (Navy League leaflet D1, 1896). Plus d'Angleterre (1887) anon. French tale published in English as "Down with England!" (1888), criticised in Clarke, Naval War 24. On fact and fiction in the genre see also the comment in French, 'Spy Fever' 356; Gooch, Prospect 37. Cf patent medicine advertisements.
51. He apparently misjudged Tillett, a former bluejacket and a navalist: see Ben Tillett, 'Our Naval Weakness', National R. (Aug'96).
52. French, 'Spy Fever'.
53. Personal communication, Prof. W.T. Stearn, official historian of B.M.(NH).
54. e.g. Clarke, Voices 135; Pattern 117-8,183; Moon 117; Samuel Hynes, The Edwardian Frame of Mind (1968)33-53; Michael Howard, The Continental Commitment (1974)37-8; Zara S. Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War (1977)156; Kennedy, Antagonism 370; Gooch, Prospect 5-12,36-7; Bond, War and Society 77; James Joll, The Origins of the First World War (1984)194-5. See also Evelyn Waugh, A Little Learning (1964)59; Robert Roberts, A Ragged Schooling (1978)137.
55. Lowe 56.

## CONCLUSION

Certain conclusions may be drawn from this study. First is the sheer variety and quantity of input of information and images to the public on war and defence, showing widespread interest, even obsession, with them. From the variety, extent and pervasiveness of input, and its vividness, excitement, human interest and appeal to anxieties, fears and hopes, came its influence. It used many media including newspaper reportage, articles in the reviews, memoirs, biographies and other non-fiction books novels, short stories, verse, lectures, magazine illustrations, paintings and prints, as well as media not considered in this thesis, such as theatre, music hall, film, advertising, toys, tournaments, tattoos, exhibitions, history, geography, recruiting publicity, elementary and public schools, boys' and youth organizations, and propaganda of defence pressure groups notably the Navy League, National Service League and Imperial Maritime League. Moreover individual communicators often used several media. For example, Russell and Forbes both wrote war reportage, articles on defence, various books and fiction, and lectured. G.S. Clarke wrote professional military articles and books, articles in the daily press and the reviews, and fiction. Steevens wrote popular journalism, articles in the reviews, and books, and lectured. Officers and defence publicists used the future-war fiction genre to promote military doctrines and reinforce their non-fiction writings. The input varied much in quality. The communicators varied from academic experts, notably Wilkinson and Mackinder, to the bizarre and bogus, notably Le Queux; from those with

experience of many wars, like Forbes, to those with no war experience, such as Lady Butler. Even the knowledgeable and experienced tended to pontificate beyond their experience and make unsubstantiated, often hyperbolic pronouncements, as did Forbes, Dilke and Steevens. The communicators were sometimes inconsistent. There was also variety of emphasis and priority and some disagreement on specific issues, notably the major defence and war controversies including firepower and infantry tactics, the role of cavalry, defence against invasion, length of service, naval ramming, and the Zulu and Nile campaigns. Through the varied media the rival schools, 'continentalist' and 'imperial', 'Blue Water' and 'invasionist', promoted their doctrines. The controversies both indicated the importance attached to the subjects, and stimulated public interest and concern.

Beyond the variety and disagreement, however, was a remarkable degree of consensus of national attitudes: the fundamental unity of the dominant image of war and defence, such that the varied media and communicators mutually reinforced their message. They shared a fundamental unity of attitude: war and defence were emotional issues, perceived as vital. Their image of war was positive: patriotism, glory, romance, adventure, heroism, moral nobility, self-sacrifice and the noble death in battle; war as the supreme challenge and test. Its negative aspects were minimised or contained within the context of its positive aspects, even in Forbes' later grim writings on firepower and the wounded. The reality of wounds, mutilation and agony was conveyed neither visually nor in writing. The minority who dissented from the bellicist consensus - some radicals,

socialists, Quakers and other pacifists - criticised it and proposed their counter-image of war as evil, futile, cruel and destructive. Yet before 1914 the bellicist image dominated the media and was generally accepted. It was purposive and inspirational, warning and urging material and moral preparation, almost always implicitly and often explicitly. This message was implicit in the artists' portrayal of war and explicit in what they wrote about their work. It was in the correspondents' reports and other writing, in Forbes' message of fitness for war and Steevens' social Darwinism. It recurred in the civilian defence publicists' warnings and proposals, and in the fiction of future war.

The dominant image resulted from selection, derived from the influences on and attitudes of the communicators: traditions, climate of opinion, dominant intellectual forces, and material and psychological pressures. These included the concepts of social Darwinism, and the insecurities and anxieties in response to Britain's relative decline, continental threats, weapon innovation, obsolescence and arms race, imperial anxieties and hopes, and the vested interests of social, political and economic groups. The image was shaped by an ideological cluster of romanticism, patriotism, imperialism, racialism, bellicism and martial values, and all these became integral to the image, which in turn reinforced them. Moreover the basic assumptions so dominated the communicators' perception and selection that those with war and battle experience saw it through them. The basic assumptions, not war experience or its absence, were crucial. There was little difference between the image presented by those with or without battle experience: for example between

Fripp and Lady Butler, or Dilke and Wilkinson. War experience did not with such communicators cause revulsion and anti-war ideology. Forbes experienced the horrors of war and continued bellicist. Steevens' response to battle was pleasure and excitement, as expressed in his paeon to the battle of the Atbara. Conversely leading anti-war publicists such as Wilfrid Lawson themselves had no war experience.<sup>1</sup> The decisive factor was not what one saw but how one saw it.

The communicators' portrayal of war and defence was only partly influenced by external pressures such as editorial or consumer demand, for they apparently had some choice. Their assumptions and perceptions of war decided their presentation, even sometimes contrary to their personal interest. For example, less bellicism might have been advantageous to Forbes or Dilke. Forbes, writing for the Gladstonian Daily News could have emphasised more the negative and less the positive aspects of war. Many Liberals wanted the former and selected it from his reports, as did Joseph Arch with the Zulu War. If Forbes had been less bellicist he might have received greater reward from the political party with which, increasingly incongruously, he remained associated. Dilke as a Radical leader might well have gained a stronger following had he been, in the tradition of Cobden, Bright and Lawson, anti-bellicist: he repeatedly disagreed on defence with those with whom he otherwise politically co-operated. Nevertheless the communicators and the image they presented were subject to various influences and constraints. Among these were

continental influences, including French influence on battle painting, and German influence on the military thinking of journalists and civilian defence reformers. Also significant were 'journalistic imperatives' - immediacy, dramatization, personalization, simplification - and social, literary and artistic conventions limiting realism. However, as MacGahan's reports on the Bulgarian atrocities showed, greater realism in describing horror could be acceptable. Similarly photographs were published presenting a less favourable image of war than the artists'. The artists, like the correspondents, imposed their own constraints. Other influences on communicators included careerism and politics. Most did not want to offend employers or patrons: one possible example was Steevens on the Boer War. Political constraints limited defence reformers, for example Dilke on conscription. Some communicators acquired a professional interest in a particular image of war, for example Forbes and his school of correspondents: in presenting war as adventure and heroism they presented themselves as heroic adventurers. Nevertheless the decisive limitations were not external pressures but internal, selective perception and self-censorship.

The defence communicators had some common characteristics. They were almost all men, with Elizabeth Butler the only notable exception. Socio-economically they tended to be typical of their professions, for example as artists or journalists, and were largely middle class. There were - working-class bellicists, notably exservicemen, and working-class publicists, but men were seldom both: Robert Blatchford

had difficulty in reconciling the demands of socialists and defencists.<sup>2</sup> On their personalities evidence is insufficient, but their writings sometimes suggest frustration and desire for recognition and status, and an emotional identification with the cause of defence and with their image of war.

The presentation of war and defence was fundamentally one of military-civilian co-operation, "the entente between the sword and the pen".<sup>3</sup> Despite some friction and conflict, and military ambivalence about war correspondents and civilian defence reformers, the relationship between the military and the civilian communicators was often symbiotic, with not civilian-military opposition but groupings across the civil-military divide, and probably the most important division that between conservatives and reformers. Civilian and military helped and used each other: for example the military help to the artists, both special war artists like Prior and studio painters like Woodville, who in turn publicised the military. Other examples were the relationships between publicity-seeking commanders, such as Wolseley, and correspondents; and the relationships of some commanders with civilian defence publicists, notably of Fisher and Beresford with civilian navalists, and of Roberts with Dilke and Wilkinson. The civilian communicators were in close touch with the military, who provided facilities and data and influenced their perceptions. Dilke's military writings, for example, largely reproduced data from Charles Brackenbury, Roberts and Ian Hamilton, often almost verbatim from their letters. Future-war fiction was written by military and by civilians, and they sometimes co-operated on a single work, for example



## The Great War of 189- or The Invasion of 1910.

The presentation of war and defence expressed both responses to specific situations and a complex, sometimes ambiguous, cluster of attitudes and values. It expressed the continuing vitality of traditional warrior values, through an era of Liberalism and in a society long suspicious of militarism. It might be interpreted, following Joseph Schumpeter, as social atavism. It was possibly an aspect of the political fusion of the upper and middle classes in the Conservative and Liberal Unionist alliance. It was partly the ancien régime elite's rebellicization of society, and probably more, as in Germany, an assertion of the tough-minded largely ex-Liberal middle class 'new' Right. It was partly a romantic reaction against late Victorian urban industrial society: a reaction expressed also in the related medievalism, chivalric imagery and idealization of rural life and the colonial frontier. The influence of the dominant image of war and defence, presented through so many media and at so many levels, was pervasive, shaping the assumptions of the pre-1914 nation.

### CONCLUSION: NOTES

1. Not all British pacifists lacked war experience. Quakers undertook relief work in the Franco-Prussian War and Boer War, J.O. Greenwood, Quaker Encounters I. Friends and Relief (1975) 47-79, 149-64.
2. Blatchford to Lady Roberts, 29 Mar 1912, 7101-23-47/85, Roberts Papers.
3. Escott 356.

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#### Abbreviations

EHR	English Historical Review	JSAHR	Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research
HJ	Historical Journal		
HT	History Today	NAMAR	National Army Museum Annual Report
HW	History Workshop		
JBS	Journal of British Studies	RUSI	Journal of the Royal United Services Institute
JCH	Journal of Contemporary History		
JICH	Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History	TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
JMH	Journal of Modern History	UJ	Uganda Journal
		VS	Victorian Studies

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### ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustrations in this thesis may be supplemented by recent publications:-

(ed) John Ferguson, War and the Creative Arts (Macmillan 1972): Callot, Goya, Vereshchagin.

Robert Wilkinson-Latham, The Sudan Campaigns 1881-1898 (Osprey 1976): E. Butler, Fripp, Giles, Woodville.

Pat Hodgson, The War Illustrators (Osprey 1977): Prior, Villiers, Woodville and other press artists.

Peter Johnson, Front Line Artists (Cassell 1978): as Hodgson.

John Keegan & Joseph Darracott, The Nature of War (Cape 1981): Callot, Detaille, Fripp, Goya, Meissonier and other battle painters.

Jan Morris, The Spectacle of Empire (Faber 1982): E. Butler, Gibb, Giles, Joy, de Neuville, Woodville.

K.Z. Cieszkowski, 'The Pallas of Pall Mall', History Today (Feb. 1982): E. Butler.

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There are photographs of E. Butler, Forbes, Prior, Russell, Steevens, Vereshchagin, Villiers and Woodville in Harmsworth's Universal Encyclopedia (nd).





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